DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 057 PS 025 459

AUTHOR Fleer, Marilyn, Ed.
TITLE Australian Research in Early Childhood Education. Volume 1.
INSTITUTION Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc., Watson.
REPORT NO ISSN-1320-6648
PUB DATE 97
NOTE 145p.; Selected refereed papers presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Research in Early Childhood Education (4th, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia, January 1996). For individual papers, see ED 390 576 and PS 025 460-471.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Proceedings (021) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Journal for Australian Research in Early Childhood Education; v1 1997
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; Art Activities; Child Caregivers; Child Development; Childhood Attitudes; Codes of Ethics; Creativity; Day Care; *Early Childhood Education; Early Intervention; *Educational Research; Employer Employee Relationship; Ethics; Family (Sociological Unit); Foreign Countries; Low Income Groups; Outdoor Activities; Parent Attitudes; Play; Popularity; Program Descriptions; Reading Instruction; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Role; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Audiographics; *Australia; Intertextuality; Staff Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This volume consists of selected refereed papers from the fourth annual conference on Australian Research in Early Childhood Education. The papers represent a cross-section of research interests in the field of early childhood education, care, and development. Differing methodologies are also featured in this issue. The papers are: (1) "Ethics in Early Childhood Field Experiences" (Coombe and Newman); (2) "The Teacher's Role in Outdoor Play: Preschool Teachers' Beliefs and Practices" (Davies); (3) "Some Implications of Popularity at Age Four" (Dockett and Degotardi); (4) "Intertextuality and Beginning Reading Instruction in the Initial School Years (Harris and Trezise); (5) "Love, Care and Politics in Low Income Early Childhood Settings: The Process of Constructing a Professional Identity" (Hill and Veale); (6) "Directors of Early Childhood Services: Experience, Preparedness and Selection" (Hayden); (7) "Teachers Coping with Changes: The Stories of Two Preschool Teachers" (Kelly and Berthelsen); (8) "A Teaching and Learning Initiative Using Audiographics Conferencing: Some Emerging Issues" (Perry and others); (9) "An Enforceable Code of Ethics: What Do Practitioners Think?" (Pollnitz); (10) "Creativity: What Does It Mean in the Family Context?" (Tennent and Berthelsen); (11) "How Family-Centred are Early Intervention Services Staff and Parent Perceptions?" (Dempsey and Carruthers); (12) "An Examination of a Young Child's Response to Performance: Implications for Arts Curricula" (Suthers and Larkin); and (13) "Teaching Dilemmas and Employment Relationships in Child Care Centres" (Burton). Each article contains references. (EV)

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AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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Volume 1
1997

Journal of Australian Research in Early Childhood Education

ISSN 1320 - 6648

PS 025459

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ISSN 1320-6648

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Selected refereed papers from the fourth Annual Conference of the Australian Research in Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, University of Canberra ACT, January 1996.

Editor

Dr Marilyn Fleer
Faculty of Education
University of Canberra
PO Box 1
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Journal Secretary

Jeanne Morrison
Faculty of Education
University of Canberra
PO Box 1
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Conference Secretary

Gemma Friedlieb
Faculty of Education
University of Canberra
PO Box 1
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

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ISSN 1320-6648

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Editorial

This volume of the journal represents the fourth edition since the conference for the Australian Research in Early Childhood Education began in 1993. Although this volume does not contain any overseas papers, the quality of the articles presented in this edition are of a very high standard.

A range of papers are featured, representing a cross-section of research interests in the field of early childhood education, care and development. Similarly, different methodologies are also featured in this issue.

The journal commences with the first of two papers which feature research into the *Code of Ethics* produced by the Australian Early Childhood Association. Kennece **Coombe** and Linda **Newman** investigated pre-service students' experiences and perceptions of ethical dilemmas whilst on practicum. Through the use of questionnaires, their study sought to establish student awareness of the *Code of Ethics*, collect examples of dilemmas the students had encountered in their practicum, and document how students responded to these situations. The results indicate that students appear to need direction in determining what constitutes an ethical decision-making situation and as well as needing guidance on how to deal with these situations. A range of alarming ethical dilemmas encountered by the students are also described in their paper.

This study is followed by an excellent paper by Margaret **Davies** on the teacher's role in outdoor play. Davies' study which collected observational and interview data from eight preschools demonstrates that minimal outdoor teacher intervention in children's play takes place, despite the research evidence in the literature to support such involvement. She concludes that teachers appear to hold relatively limited conceptions of their role in relation to promoting children's development in the outdoor setting.

Sue **Dockett** and Shelia **Degotardi's** study of 24 five-year-old children's views of the popularity of their peers provides facinating reading. Using sociometric interviews children were asked to rate their peers according to whether they 'liked to play with them a lot', 'liked to play with them sometimes', or 'didn't like to play with them'. The results were compared with the teachers' perceptions of each child's popularity. The ratings were compared with measures of performance on a series of false belief, appearance-reality and representational change tasks (theory of mind tasks). Dockett and Degotardi found that there is a significant positive correlation between children's performance on theory of mind tasks and their reported peer popularity. Children who were perceived as unpopular by teachers were rated as popular by the children. Similarly, children who were considered as popular by the teachers were not necessarily those deemed popular by the children.

Pauline **Harris** and Jillian **Trezise** present research into the intertextuality in reading instruction in the initial school years. Their research, conducted over three years, in which 15 children were tracked through their first three years of school, demonstrates that early childhood educators need to understand the intertextual and discursive histories children bring to the classroom and how these shape their interpretations of lessons and written texts. Without shared understanding about the text under consideration and the range of possible experiences children have, issues of equity, access and success at school and in the broader socio-cultural context of society come into question.

The issue of equity is considered further in an outstanding paper by Susan **Hill** and Ann **Veale**. Their longitudinal research documents undergraduate early childhood students' constructs about becoming a teacher in three settings: childcare, preschool, and the first years of school. Twenty students were asked to respond to Kelly's Repertory Grid during the first week and final week of practicum. Students were asked to expand on the information

contained in the grid and reflect on the progress of their own experiences. Hill and Veale outline that although students encountered children from low socio-economic groups whilst on practicum (and indeed are likely to teach children in these particular areas upon graduation), they were highly critical of parents who placed children in child care centres. Hill and Veale argued that implicit within their responses was a view that parents have enough money to spend time at home with children to develop children's character, values and attitudes. They ask whether the traditional focus on child study draws students' attention away from the broader socio-political issues to do with poverty, families and young children. Overall, they found that students' constructs did shift between the beginning and conclusion of the practicum.

Jacqueline **Hayden** presents the findings of a survey and follow-up interviews of practicing Directors of childcare and preschool centres in New South Wales focusing on their background, experiences, means of recruitments, levels of satisfaction, training needs and other concerns. Hayden found that most Directors of childcare centres (as apposed to preschool centres) had on average of only two years' experience, with many acquiring their position internally and most choosing progression not for monetary gain but for professional reasons. Interestingly, she found that Directors of preschools had considerably more experience.

In a study by Alison **Kelly** and Donna **Berthelsen** which sought to document the impact of Departmental changes on two preschool teachers they found three areas of concern. First, teachers' experience at the classroom level such as time pressures, daily programming, and planning of curriculum activities whilst ensuring quality interactions with children and parents were evident. The second area reported related to teachers' experience at the school level where there was an expectation to attend an ever-increasing number of school meetings. Finally, teachers discussed the societal and political pressures evident such as the under valuing of child care and preschool and the continued need to highlight their importance within the community.

Rosemary **Perry**, Gail **Halliwell** and Ian **MacPherson** present an interesting evaluation study of simultaneous telephone and computer (audiographics) conferencing to teacher Master of Education unit at the Queensland University of Technology. Data were collected from students, lecturers and observers in the form of student or lecturer reflections and as observations made of sessions by five observers. Issues that emerged in their study related to clarifying the pedagogy as it related to the changed teaching context and the use of the technology as a tool for the delivery of tutorial sessions. Benefits were reported for both students and lecturers, including focusing more directly on the content. Concerns were directed towards the technical problems associated with using the technology for the teaching and for lack of non-verbal clues usually evident in face-to-face sessions.

Lois **Pollnitz** provides a second study focusing on the *Code of Ethics* published through the Australian Early Childhood Association by, explored early childhood practitioners' thinking about the monitoring and enforcement of a code of ethics for their profession. Through the survey of 200 practitioners in childcare and preschool, Pollnitz found that the majority of practitioners perceive ethical issues as worth struggling with intellectually, and are committed to adherence to a uniform code of ethics for early childhood personnel. However, variability in responses were reported for voluntary or compulsory monitoring and the issue of the enforcing agent.

Lee **Tennent** and Donna **Berthelsen** examined aspects of family environments which were influential in the development of children's creativity. Tennent and Berthelsen surveyed 123 mothers of children aged four to six years and found that they most valued the personality characteristics associated with creativity, and provided environments which would nurture creativity.

In a study conducted by Ian **Dempsey** and Anne **Carruthers** into the perceived support provided or received in early intervention programs, parents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support they were receiving. Staff rated the level of support to families at a

higher level than parents. Overall, parents and staff wanted a family-centred approach, with parents indicating the need for a variety of choices in decisions affecting them.

In a case study of one child attending an children's opera for the first time, Louie **Suthers** and Veronicah **Larkin** found that there are benefits for children in attending operatic performances designed for children. Through pre- and post-performance interviews and observational notes taken during the child's attendance at the opera, Suthers and Larkin identified a range of activities performed by the child which indicated that the child had understood and gained from attending the opera.

The final paper presented in this volume is by Judith **Burton**. She investigated teachers' practical knowledge about connections between their efforts to create curriculum and the employment relations at their workplace.

The fourteen papers in this volume reflect the diversity of research interests and activity found in the early childhood research community within Australia.

Marilyn Fleer
Editor

University of Canberra
November 1996

REVIEW PANEL

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Dr Sue Dockett, University of Western Sydney, Macarthur

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RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIAN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS FOR THE PREPARATION OF PAPERS AND DISKS

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Each paper is to have a maximum length of 10 pages in ARECE format. This length includes text, reference list and pages containing diagrams, figures and tables. All pages are to be numbered consecutively.

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Include an abstract of between 100-200 words, headed **ABSTRACT** (centred/bold/caps), immediately following the title; the whole abstract should be indented.

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Figure 3: A model of the learning process

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References

References to journals and books should be as follows: In the body of the paper references should appear, for example, as Bernstein (1991), or Fisher and Fraser (1983). References in parentheses are presented as (White & Tisher, 1986). These references should be placed in the reference list as follows:

e.g.,

Bernstein, B (1971). *Class, codes and control*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Fisher, DL, & Fraser, BJ (1983). A comparison of actual and preferred classroom environments as perceived by science teachers and students. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *20*, 55-61.

White, R, & Tisher, R (1986). Natural sciences. In MC Wittrock (ed.) *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd edn). New York: McMillan.

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AUTHOR

Dr Mary Smith, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Central Australia, Alice Springs, NT 0870. Specialisations: Early childhood curriculum development, early childhood teacher education.

ETHICS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD FIELD EXPERIENCES

Kennece Coombe
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
and
Linda Newman
University of Western Sydney, Nepean
with the assistance of
Marzieh Arefi and Fiona Davidson
University of Western Sydney, Nepean

ABSTRACT

The place of ethics in the professions is often unquestioned. What is not so clear is the awareness of early childhood students about ethical issues and their contribution to ethical practice. The New South Wales Early Childhood Practicum Council has developed 'Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Early Childhood Field Experience' on the premise that there is insufficient awareness amongst early childhood education stakeholders about how to deal with ethical concerns. This paper reports on a survey of students that examines student experiences and perceptions of ethical dilemmas in the practicum. The survey sought to establish a level of student awareness of the existence of the Australian Early Childhood Association's *Code of Ethics*, what constitutes ethics, some examples of the students' perceptions of ethical dilemmas they encountered in the practicum and their ability to respond. The paper suggests action and strategies which can be taken within teacher preparation courses for the development of strategies to facilitate ethical practice in the practicum.

INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses four aspects of discussion about ethics and the practicum. First, it contextualises the discussion about ethics within the realms of the professional. Second, it considers ethics within the narrower field of education and the practicum. Third, it will present the results of a survey of early childhood education students undertaken during 1995 before considering the final aspect of suggesting action and strategies to facilitate ethical practice in the practicum in light of practicum stakeholders.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Ethics or ethical behaviour encompasses a range of values relating to morality and 'proper' conduct. Although the general idea of ethical practice is acknowledged within a range of professions, the same Code of Ethics would not be appropriate for medicos, legal professionals, architects, accountants and teachers. The constitution of ethical conduct is a construction of morality based on the cultural and professional biases of those in positions of power. These biases then become the accepted norms of behaviour—ethical standards.

The notion of ethics is never unproblematic. Because what constitutes ethical behaviour is context-specific, it is difficult to define. For example, it would be considered to be unethical behaviour if medical practitioners were to advertise as medical practitioners. On the other hand, they are quite at liberty to advertise their services as lay marriage celebrants or tutors for HSC students in maths or physics. Thus, to advertise is not in itself regarded as unethical behaviour, except within particular constraints, and it is within the purview of professional

organisations to determine which constraints, and what ethical principles, apply within a particular profession.

Given the number of professions and trades which have actively pursued the development and implementation of codes of ethics, it seems reasonable to assume that such codes are seen as important symbols that indicate: externally, for public consumption, that the association or group to which the workers belong is one that values morality and integrity; and, internally, that the association has a prescribed standard of acceptable behaviour which also serves as a validation for disciplinary action against non-conformity. Coady (1994), presents some degree of cynicism in pointing out that *the past record of many professions in enforcing their codes of ethics is not reassuring, leading many to believe that such codes provide a veneer of professional commitment to hide incompetence and malpractice behind a collective wall of secrecy justified by the principle of confidentiality* (Coady, 1994:5).

It is not the purpose of this paper to problematise ethics to any grand extent, rather the discussion thus far serves as a caveat to that which follows — a reminder that each of the groups of stakeholders within education will have a slightly different view of ethics from each other. And each view will be determined by the biases each group has about what is important, moral and right.

ETHICS IN EDUCATION

The role, application and evaluation of ethics and ethical standards in education have received a deal of attention in the literature (Bredekamp & Willer, 1993; Katz, 1993; Strike & Ternasky, 1993; Poplin & Ebert, 1993; Smith, 1994; Sottile, 1994; Hatch, 1995). Katz (1993) indicates that a code of ethics is one of eight characteristics of a profession and uses these characteristics to consider the professionalism of early childhood education.

Sottile (1994), for example, points to the lack of preparation of teachers to deal with situations involving ethical decision-making. He found that the teachers he surveyed indicated that the three most common types of ethical dilemmas they experienced related to psychological (emotional) abuse, confidentiality, and physical abuse. On the other hand, Poplin and Ebert (1993) discuss the perceptions of parents that the moral and ethical stand taken by teachers might well undermine that which is part of the family culture.

The almost inevitable concomitant of teachers dealing with the subjective nature of morals and ethics in the classroom is the moral dilemma. Katz (1992) defines the dilemma as a predicament wherein there is a choice between alternative courses of action and the selection of one of the alternatives sacrifices the advantages that might accrue from a different selection. She continues:

> *It is assumed further, that each of the two 'horns' of the dilemma, A and B, carry with them their own errors; alternative A involves certain errors as does alternative B; error-free alternatives are not really available. In principle, each of the available alternatives involves 'a choice of error'. Thus part of our task is to determine which error is preferred in each predicament.* (Katz, 1992:165)

Such choices confront students during their practicum sessions. To facilitate early childhood teacher's preparation, information is needed about students' experiences of decision-making in situations of ethical dilemma. Thus, the survey that is reported on here sought to consider students' views about their recent practicum sessions..

THE SURVEY

In July/August 1995, 179 students enrolled in early childhood teacher education programs at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga and University of Western Sydney, Nepean were surveyed by means of a written questionnaire. Fifty-four (30%) of the respondents were first year students, 50 (28%) were in their second year, and 75 (42%) were third year students.

Eighteen of the students (10%) were studying at CSU. The survey instrument comprised 12 questions intended to elicit information in relation to the students' knowledge about the existence of codes of ethics, their understandings about such codes and their experiences with ethical dilemmas during their practicum sessions. The purpose of the survey at this time was as a 'pilot' to provide some foundation data from which the determination could be made to proceed with a more extensive piece of research. The inherent difficulties of relying on one-shot, question and response surveys were recognised. There was some attempt to offset these difficulties by encouraging short, written responses as well as including Likert-type rankings. Quantitative responses were analysed according to students' year of study using Chi Square and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques.

Briefly, 171 of the students were able to provide a response to the question, 'What is a code of ethics?' Chi Square analyses indicated no relationship between year of course and knowledge of the Australian Early Childhood Association (AECA) *Code of Ethics*, possibly indicating that students are introduced to the *Code of Ethics* at the beginning of their respective course in the universities studied. Students' responses to what constituted a code of ethics were categorised into four areas: professionalism; guidelines, standards and structures; beliefs, values and attitudes; and, behaviours and practices. These categorisations arose from the data and were not predetermined. Ten 'professions' were nominated by students as having codes of ethics, with the most predominant one being teaching (56%) followed by medicine (29%). Hairdressing and real estate were included. Examples of the responses from the students which were included in each of the categorisations were:

Professionalism:

> *Statements which bind a profession together. Ethics are sort of a law by which you should abide, believe and understand.*
>
> *A list of the expectations of a professional in their field. Thus, what is expected of them, the roles they have and their responsibilities.*
>
> *A set of norms, values, protocols etc. that members of a profession subscribe to.*
>
> *Our professional responsibility towards the children, parents, colleagues and the community.*
>
> *A summary of information relevant to a particular profession that outlines suitable or acceptable practice while working within that profession on a daily basis, based on professional community beliefs.*

Guidelines, standards and structures:

> *A set of rules to protect the rights of others.*
>
> *A code of ethics is a 'code' which we follow. It provides a standard or guideline—may or may not be signed.*
>
> *A set of statements of 'advice' that a certain profession may use as a guideline to issues relating to work.*
>
> *A set of guidelines owned and designed by professionals to ensure continuity and quality in all areas of their work. Beliefs, values and attitudes.*

Beliefs, values and attitudes

> *Beliefs and moral compromises.*
>
> *A code of ethics is not really a philosophy but a set of beliefs shared by a group.*

Personal beliefs and values that influence your behaviour in daily interactions.

It is a set of comments about appropriate behaviour relating to self and others.

A set of morals, beliefs and values that people in a certain profession should adhere to.

Behaviours and practices

A list of ethical practices and behaviours which must be used and practised by the early childhood professional at all times.

A statement of the expected behaviours that will occur within a centre. The centre usually devises the ethics themselves.

As the responses above might indicate, there were overlaps into two or more of the categorisations, so it was not possible to specify the **number** of responses exclusive to each category, nor even those which might be generally included in the category. It was noted, however, that a majority of responses alluded to the notion of 'Guidelines, standards and structures'. There was only the occasional reference to issues of moral conduct though this concept might well have been an implicit understanding within the students' conceptions about beliefs and values or behaviours and practices.

There seemed to be the general expectation that codes of ethics were imposed from beyond the day-to-day lives of the practitioners and that there was little sense of ownership of what was contained within such codes and limited consideration of the students' own moral and ethical stance. Similarly, there appeared to be scant understanding that codes might allow for autonomous action and critically reflective practice. Eleven students either could not, or chose not to, nominate a profession that had a code of ethics, although only two students were unaware of the existence of the AECA *Code of Ethics*.

More than two-thirds of the students reported that they had witnessed three or more situations of ethical dilemma while on practicum placements. (See Figure 1)

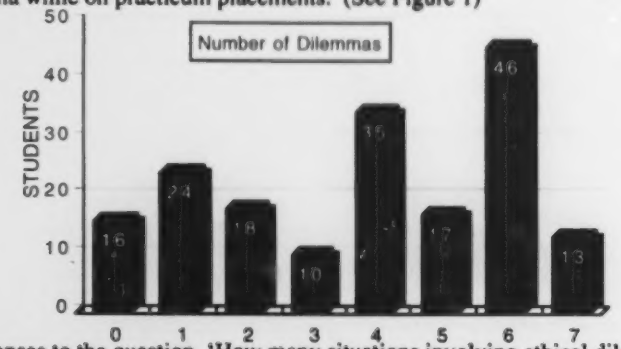

Figure 1: Responses to the question, 'How many situations involving ethical dilemmas have you been in since you commenced this course?'

The dilemmas that were described indicated some confusion in understanding the difference between ethical dilemmas and the observation of poor practice though some did suggest that the choices that confronted them when being drawn into, or observing, poor practice was the source of the dilemma. Examples of observations of poor practice rather than ethical dilemmas, *per se*, included:

* *On prac I was asked to change a baby without wearing gloves.*
* *Staff not keeping developmental records.*

Comments which 'created' dilemmas from observations of such practice were exemplified in the following terms:

* *When I was an assistant in a 0–3's room and the materials given to the babies were developmentally inappropriate. My dilemma was, should I mention this to the teacher or not.*

Several of the stories provided by the students seemed to include an implicit, if unarticulated, query of 'Should I mention it?'; 'Should I intervene?'; 'Should I report it to someone else?'. And where this can be read into their reports, the dilemmas as they saw them became quite clear. The short descriptions of the professional ethical dilemmas the students had faced were coded into three categories: interactions and practices; abuse; and supervision of students. Again, it was difficult to code responses into discreet categories. It is arguable that those descriptions relating to abuse could similarly have been coded for interactions and practices and so on. Examples of the coded data for each of the categories included:

Interactions and practices

This category of data included those issues relating to confidentiality, staff interactions and staff relationships with parents.

> *An assistant roughly manhandled (sic) a child who was suffering from separation anxiety. The assistant was abusive both physically and verbally. The mother of the child happened to have observed the incident and withdrew her child from care. The assistant declared she had done nothing wrong and had the support of the rest of the staff. But I was in a situation of being the middle man. I saw what the mother saw, but was expected to take the defence of the assistant.*
>
> *The Director of a centre told a boy that home corner was only for girls and that he should do something else.*
>
> *A carer who was comparing two children and their skills to do puzzles.*
>
> *A parent wanted to know about another child's progress and as a student, also as a professional, it was not my position to speak or reveal any confidential information.*
>
> *A parent told me to hit his children when they are misbehaving and since I wouldn't, he questioned what kind of caregiver I was for not hitting the children to make them do the right thing.*
>
> *Staff bitching about other staff in front of me and asking my opinion about them.*

Abuse

The category of 'abuse' included those incidents which related to the perceived physical or emotional abuse of children.

> *In a small group situation, a child was singled out, pulled up by his arm and made to stand in the corner while the teacher yelled at him in front of the other children.*
>
> *I did not believe in the way the children were criticised or put down by the teachers. These children that were from different cultures or backgrounds were particular targets. The teachers continued the judgments, jokes and their comments to me and expected me to feel the same and to treat the children in the same way.*

At a day care centre one staff member told off a child in a way that was quite unpleasant in front of other staff members and all other children and then locked him in a baby chair. But the child wasn't a baby, he was nearly three. Everyone there was told not to communicate with him.

A child being grabbed, dragged by the arm and sat on a 'naughty chair'.

Situation such as when a child has done something inappropriate for their age, for example wet pants. Teacher scolds child and says they should know better and tells them that they are behaving like a baby.

Insisting that a distressed child (under 2) wait 40 minutes for her bottle. She was constantly crying and asking for it, but had to wait for morning tea.

Supervision of students

In terms of the supervision of students, there were examples reported where the students felt that they were put in an invidious position because they were left to cope on their own.

Being left alone by teachers in the nappy room with two babies on first year prac. I did not feel happy about this or trained enough to handle this situation.

Being left alone in the classroom with children.

I was asked to sit with a group of children during morning tea. This was my first visit and I was not sure of what they expected of me. I asked the children to sit down and one child wasn't doing what I said. I asked nicely and then told him. He had a piece of fruit in his mouth and spat it at me. Another teacher came over and took him away.

A group of 3–4-year-old boys kept on swearing at me and other children. At first I was shocked as I didn't know how to deal with it. I felt all I could say was that 'that sort of language isn't used here at daycare'. However, they kept on saying, 'You stupid, fucking slut!'

From this brief selection of responses, it is clear that students are exposed to a range of situations which cause them to be concerned while they are undertaking professional experience in schools and centres. The final four questions on the survey were used to garner some information about the students' self-rankings of how confident they felt in the situations they described, how well they felt they had handled it, how confident they would now feel about handling the situation and finally how well-prepared they feel to handle such ethical dilemmas in the work situation when they are teachers. These results are summarised in figures 2-4 below. The ranking codes for each of the tables are: 1=not at all; 2=limited; 3=developing; 4=quite; and, 5=very.

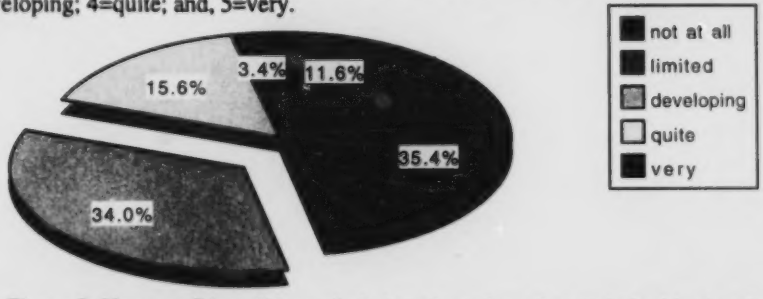

Figure 2: How confident did you feel about knowing what to do in this situation? (*32 cases missing)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques indicated that students' perception of their knowledge of what to do was correlated with the year of their course (0.06, $p<0.07$), suggesting that students' perceptions of their own ability to handle dilemmas appropriately increases as they progress through their course.

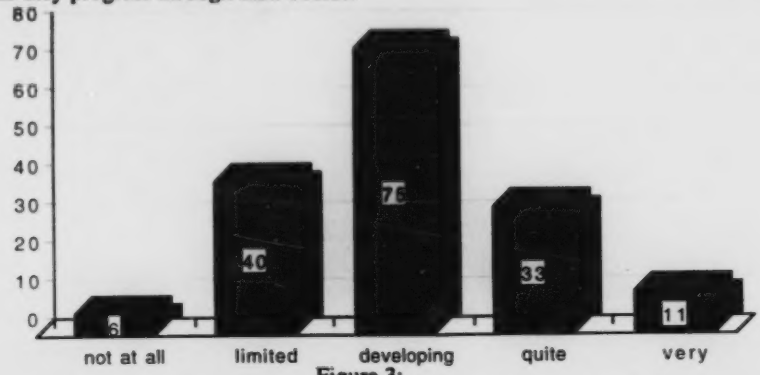

Figure 3:
How prepared do you now feel about your ability to handle difficult ethical situations when you are out on field experience?

(*14 cases missing)

ANOVA techniques again revealed that students' perceptions of their current ability to handle dilemmas in field experiences was highly correlated with the year of their course (0.002, $p<0.005$). Similar to the students' perception of knowledge of what to do, students felt that their ability to apply the knowledge to appropriate action increased as they progressed through their course.

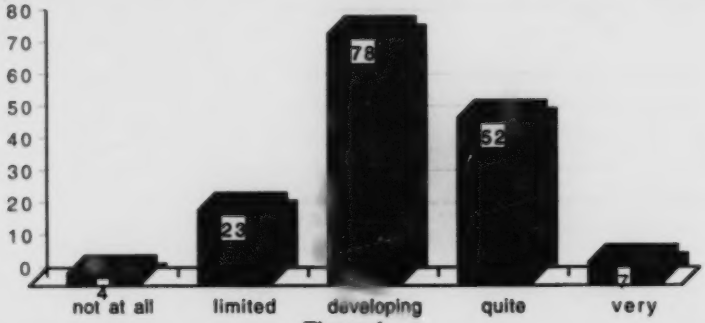

Figure 4:
How prepared do you now feel about your ability to handle difficult ethical situations when you commence work?

(*15 cases missing)

Similar to the previous analyses, students felt more confident about their future ability to handle dilemmas after graduation, as they proceeded through their early childhood courses.

Data analysis indicated a firm ambivalence on the part of the students regarding their confidence in relation to situations involving ethical dilemmas. However, analyses revealed that the level of confidence amongst the students increased according to their succeeding years of study.

STRATEGIES

It is not possible to ensure that students are placed only in 'sanitised' practicum situations, thus it becomes the responsibility of the teacher preparation institution to advise students

about some of the dilemmas they might experience and to assist them with strategies to cope, and perhaps, to institute change. This final section of the paper attempts to offer some strategies in this vein.

Currently, there are several projects underway to facilitate students' and other stakeholders' understanding and practice of ethical behaviours during early childhood fieldwork experiences.

At this point it is necessary to differentiate between those guidelines which relate to general codes of conduct such as the AECA *Code of Ethics* and the *Code of Ethical Conduct* of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and those which relate specifically to ethics in the practicum: *Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Early Childhood Field Experience* developed by the Early Childhood Practicum Council of New South Wales.

The 'Guidelines' developed by the Practicum Council did not evolve in isolation from the AECA code but rather as an adjunct to it with a specific focus on the particular situations which present themselves in the practicum. The 'Guidelines' consider the responsibilities for ethical practice that are applicable to the tertiary institution, the student, the professional colleague and the centre/school and inform each about the expectations held for them and what they might expect of other stakeholders. The strategies which can be employed to introduce the 'Guidelines' to each of the stakeholder groups include information seminars within the university setting and inservice sessions for staff either in individual settings or group inservices which include a number of settings at a time. In developing such strategies, care must be taken to avoid a metropolitan model of information dissemination to ensure the involvement of staff and students in rural and remote locations. The production of a video-recording of examples and discussion topics which is presently in production by members of the Practicum Council will assist in overcoming a little of the tyranny of distance and will also assist as a teaching tool in the preparation of students for the practicum. The 'Guidelines' and video will assist in individual or group preparation of students for field experiences.

Further strategies could involve the encouragement of universities to include the 'Guidelines' within practicum handbooks to ensure dissemination to all cooperating colleagues involved in any given practicum session. This strategy would allow the 'Guidelines' to be available for quick reference during the practicum and provide a focus for debriefing by both staff and students following the practicum session.

CONCLUSION

The results of the survey that was reported on here indicated that students appear to need some direction in firstly determining what constitutes an ethical decision-making situation and secondly, knowing how to deal with it. It is the responsibility of the institution that is preparing students for the early childhood work force to ensure this preparation is as thorough as possible. This would mean inclusion of the study of ethics within professional education subjects. The *Guidelines for Ethical Practice in Early Childhood Field Experience* provides one source for such professional development. Others to be included would be the AECA Code of Ethics as well as consideration of various resource publications which direct attention to the understanding and implementation of ethical guidelines (Fasoli & Woodrow; NAEYC, 1994)

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AUTHORS

Dr Kennece Coombe, Lecturer in Education at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. Research interests include gender issues, ethics, mentoring, practicum issues and learning organisations in early childhood education.

Linda Newman, Lecturer in Early Childhood Education, University of Western Sydney, Nepean. Research interests include ethids in the practicum, and how children learn.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN OUTDOOR PLAY: PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Margaret Davies
The University of Newcastle

ABSTRACT

The study reported in this paper was designed to examine teachers' thinking, and their practices, in relation to the role of the teacher in children's outdoor play. Interviews with eight preschool teachers revealed beliefs about the teacher's role that were consistent with beliefs about the purpose and value of outdoor play in the early childhood curriculum. Furthermore, observations of children's play in these eight preschools supported teachers' reports of their curriculum beliefs. Implications of these findings for the professional development of early childhood teachers are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that the early childhood teacher has a significant role in promoting children's development and learning. Furthermore, the particular nature of this role derives from the developmental theoretical framework that underpins early childhood education.

According to developmental theory, young children are self-motivated, active learners. Through direct experiences in their environments, and through their play, children extend their physical and socio-emotional development, and construct understandings of their world. More complex understandings, and more complex ways of thinking, develop progressively as children interact within and upon the environment. Children's development is enhanced through interaction with others, particularly with adults and more capable peers, who both challenge the child's developing conceptions and provide frameworks, or scaffolding, to support the development of shared socio-cultural understandings (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).

In early childhood education, where a central purpose is to support and promote all aspects of individual children's development, the role of the teacher is primarily to encourage exploration and social interaction, and to respond to the initiatives of individual children (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; New, 1992). Rather than imparting information or instructing children directly, the teacher creates settings for child-initiated play and adopts particular strategies to support this play (Jones & Reynolds, 1992).

A range of teacher strategies to facilitate play and, hence, development has been identified in the literature. One important such strategy is for teachers to observe children and their play to acquire insight into the interests, perceptions, understandings, feelings and capacities of individual children (e.g., Abbott, 1994; Hurst, 1994; Jones & Reynolds, 1992). These observations then provide the basis for planning the environment, the ongoing assessment of the play needs of individuals and groups of children, and the appropriate timing and level of teacher intervention in children's activities (Heaslip, 1994).

Other strategies involve more direct teacher intervention, albeit in response to children's actions. Teachers guide children to play safely and constructively, and extend children's activities through suggestions or questions, sometimes participating with children to extend a play theme or conceptual understandings, sometimes redirecting to exploit incidental learning

(Hildebrand, 1990). Teachers also act as mediators, helping children to learn to solve problems on their own (Jones & Reynolds, 1992), to develop self-control and to build self-esteem (Bredekamp, 1987).

Promoting dialogue with, and among, young children in play is regarded as another important aspect of the early childhood teacher's role (e.g., David, 1990; Fleer, 1992). Communication and interaction with peers and adults in the context of play contribute to children's socialisation (Scales, 1987), to their emotional (Kuebli, 1994) and cognitive development (New, 1992).

Research has shown that teacher involvement can stimulate and enrich children's play, with positive developmental consequences (e.g., Casey & Lippman, 1991; Creaser, 1989; McCune, 1986; Morrow & Rand, 1991; Saltz & Saltz, 1986; Smilansky, 1990). However, research also supports children's need to engage in free play, alone and with peers, without interference from adults (e.g., Christie & Wardle, 1992). For example, the mere presence of adults can be constraining for some children. The presence of teachers has been shown to inhibit preschool children's dramatic play, their social interaction and their willingness to negotiate their own solutions to conflict (Pellegrini, 1984). Parental presence had a similar effect of inhibiting the fantasy play of four- and five-year-old children, although it had a facilitating effect for younger two- and three-year-olds (Perlmutter & Pellegrini, 1987).

Research further indicates that excessive and inappropriate adult interaction can have disruptive effects on children's play (Berk, 1994). Such interaction has been found, for example, to disrupt the flow of play (Silver & Ramsey, 1983) and to limit children's use of language and expression of thought (Tizard &' Hughes, 1984), their involvement in socio-dramatic play (Creaser, 1989), and their interaction with peers (Innocenti, Stowitschek, Rule, Killoran, Striefel & Boswell, 1986).

For teacher interaction in children's play to be effective, adults need to be sensitive to children's individual development and interests. Moreover, teachers need to appreciate and respect the child's point of view and to synchronise their intervention in a reciprocal manner with the child's efforts and abilities (Abbott, 1994; Am, 1986; Creaser, 1989; David, 1990; Kitson, 1994; Tamburrini, 1986; Vukelich, 1994; Wolfgang & Sanders, 1986).

There are, however, some indications that early childhood teachers may not fully understand the importance of adults and children interacting and working together in the play context or the nature of these interactive relationships (David, 1990; Moyles, 1994). For instance, teachers appear to hold different conceptions of their role relative to children's activity. Some teachers clearly see the need for teacher participation, in varying degrees to promote children's thinking and learning (e.g., Ayers, 1989; Regan & Weininger, 1988). In contrast, other nursery, preschool and child care teachers seem to believe children should be left to explore and experiment in the play environment, with opportunities for peer interactions but largely uninterrupted by adults (e.g., File, 1994; Howes & Clements, 1994; Hutt, Tyler, Hutt & Christopherson, 1989; Smilansky, 1990).

The tendency for teachers to stand around watching children play, intervening only when a safety hazard arises or when a child requires some form of assistance, appears to be a particular feature of teachers' interpretation of their role in outdoor settings. There has been a strong tradition in education that the outdoor setting and, particularly, the school playground is merely a place for teachers to take a rest and for children to expend excess energy, to engage in boisterous activity and to have a break from what is perceived to be the more important learning that occurs indoors in the classroom (Essa, 1992; Gelenter, 1988; Yerkes, 1988).

Supporting evidence for such attitudes to an early childhood teacher's role in outdoor play can be found in observational studies of teacher and child behaviours outdoors. Child care, preschool and nursery teachers were rarely observed participating in children's activities outdoors (Brown & Burger, 1984; Hutt et al., 1989; Wittmer & Honig, 1994) and teacher

participation was mainly confined to setting up equipment, settling disputes among children and maintaining safety (Jones, 1989; Sylva, Roy & Painter, 1980).

Limited teacher perspectives on the educational potential of outdoor play, and on the teacher's own role in outdoor play, can have important consequences for children's play and for their development. Research indicates that teachers who either did not understand, or underestimated, the potential of outdoors play to stimulate various aspects of children's learning and development, other than physical development, provided sterile outdoor environments with limited play choices and opportunities (Creaser, 1985; Hutt et al., 1989; Jones, 1989). As a consequence, much of children's play was physical (Hutt et al., 1989) and showed little imagination or complexity (Creaser, 1985; Jones, 1989), while teachers' behaviour centred on maintaining safety and directing children's play (Creaser, 1985; Jones, 1989). More importantly, these studies demonstrated that the re-evaluation by teachers of their outdoor environments led to the creation of more interesting and stimulating settings where children were observed to be absorbed in complex and productive play and where teachers, too, became more creative in the strategies they used to support this play.

Unfortunately, there is relatively little direct research on teachers' conceptions of their role in children's play or on the relationship between teachers' thinking and their practice on this issue. Research is particularly scarce, moreover, on children's play in outdoor settings. The purpose of this paper is to present findings on these issues from a larger investigation of the outdoor curriculum in early childhood education (Davies, 1995). The findings reported here comprise an examination of teachers' thinking and their practices in relation to the role of the teacher in children's outdoor play.

METHOD

Data for this paper were drawn from a study conducted in eight preschools. The study involved interviews with teachers about their beliefs and practices relating to the outdoor curriculum and observations of children's outdoor play. Interviews were conducted after children were observed to ensure the interview experience did not influence teachers' practice (following Berk, 1976). For the purpose of this paper, only methodological details pertaining to teachers' beliefs about the role of the teacher and observations of teacher behaviour in relation to children's play are reported.

Participants

Participants were the teaching Directors of eight preschools. Two were the owners of private preschools. One (T1) had trained as a primary teacher, the other (T2) had no formal training. The other six, from community preschools, held some form of early childhood teaching qualification in the form of a Child Care Certificate (T3) or a Degree or Diploma in Early Childhood Education (T4, T5, T6, T7, T8). Teaching experience varied from five to 32 years.

Other participants were 10 four-year-old children selected from each of the eight preschools, yielding a total sample of 80 children. Children were selected for inclusion in the sample not only according to their age but also because they attended the particular preschool the same two days per week and had not attended an early childhood service prior to enrolling at the preschool.

Procedures

Teachers were interviewed by the author at their preschools in a room away from the children and at a time convenient to them. With the permission of teachers, interviews were audiotaped. The technique of focused interviews was employed to focus attention on issues and guide discussion as this approach is considered more effective than structured techniques in exploring teacher thinking and beliefs (Kidder, 1981). An interview guide of open-ended questions was developed, with questions relating to various aspects of the outdoor curriculum, including the role of teachers in outdoor play.

Audiotapes were transcribed in full. Following procedures described by Miles and Huberman (1984), responses to focus questions were coded using categories generated from teachers' responses. After the initial coding of data, samples of responses were independently coded by a colleague. The two sets of coding were then compared, points of disagreement discussed, codes refined and data re-analysed.

Observations of children were obtained by three trained observers using the Target Child Observation Method (Sylva et al., 1980). This method involved recording one 20-minute running observation of each target child. Immediately after each observation session was completed, observation records were coded by the observer responsible for collecting the data. Observations were coded, in 30 second intervals, for type of play, social interaction, type of communication, presence of teacher and teacher behaviour. Teacher behaviour codes were adapted from Creaser (1989). These included:

- *present, no involvement*
- *management of environment*, e.g., rearranges equipment
- *care*, e.g., helps with clothing, attends to hurt child
- *verbal comment*, e.g., comment, explanation, conversation, praise
- *behaviour management*, e.g., gives direction, states rules
- *physical help in play*, e.g., pushes swing, gets pet from cage
- *supports play*, e.g., offers resources, suggests activity, suggests solution to play problem, questions to extend play
- *plays with*, e.g., takes role in pretence.

Finally, an *other* code was used when the behaviour of the teacher was directed to children other than the target child and where the intent of teacher behaviour was unclear from the observation.

RESULTS

Teacher thinking

Teachers' responses to the question about the role they take in the outdoor setting revealed a distinct and shared belief that, while children should be carefully supervised, they should have the freedom to engage in activities of their own choice, without unnecessary intervention from teachers.

> *I want (staff) to supervise very, very carefully. I don't expect them to interfere unnecessarily ... I like the children to have a great deal of freedom ... freedom to express themselves, freedom to race around ... where there's not a lot of interference from an adult.* (T1)

> *(We) provide the equipment and let them use it how they want to.* (T2)

> *... (children) want to use (gross motor equipment) in a different way. And we don't hamper that choice of using it (the equipment) in a different way as long as it's a safe practice and there's an adult close by.* (T7)

Teachers predominantly perceived their role in terms of setting the stage for play, observing and monitoring events, and intervening or redirecting only when children's behaviour was considered to be inappropriate or unsafe.

> *I draw the line when they take witches hats up (on the climbing frame) and throw them overboard ... I don't like wild play ... And I like to bring them in for a cooling down time if I can.* (T3)

> *If there are difficulties staff step in and redirect and may introduce another activity which might be block building, let's make a tent, let's go and do this, or bring out a ball game. So it's redirection in a constructive way.* (T8)

Providing emotional support to children was considered an important aspect of the teacher's role. So, too, was encouraging children with particular needs to participate in specific activities.

> *Encourage the children that really aren't keen to just try, with us helping them ... A lot of children do stand back. Only just look. So they're the ones I suppose you need to encourage.* (T5)

> *We are aware that we need to encourage children who are interested in quiet more sedentary activities. We try to encourage their participation in other activities for further development in other areas.* (T7)

Some mentioned staff participating in children's play; however, from other comments they made, it appeared this interaction with children in their play was not perceived as a major part of the teacher's role. Nor was an active leadership role in play considered important: only two teachers made reference to extending play through questions, comments or suggestions.

> *We're extending vocabulary and we're extending their thoughts and their ideas and things like that.* (T6)

> *... intervening to actually promote their play. It may be to help social interactions, to suggest ideas, to help develop them cognitively if they're filling water up in bottles in the sandpit.* (T4)

There also were few references to the use of more direct teaching approaches in the outdoor setting, such as organising games or teaching a skill. When teachers did talk about extending children's play in these more direct ways, this always appeared to be based on the teacher's interpretation of the children's needs or interests. Teachers stressed the importance of using children's ideas and interests as starting points for teacher intervention and of avoiding unnecessary intervention in children's activities:

> *Children have their own basic ideas but as teachers I feel that our role is taking them that little bit further, but being aware of when you're needed and when you're not.* (T4)

It appears these teachers had very clear conceptions of the role of the teacher in children's outdoor play. Further, this view of minimal intervention by teachers was consistent with their beliefs about children as learners and about the purpose and value of outdoor play in the early childhood curriculum, beliefs that were evident from their responses to other questions. Teachers expressed clear beliefs that children are self motivated and capable of initiating and directing their own activity, and that children learn through interacting with the environment. In addition, the function of outdoor play in the curriculum was conceptualised as a setting for fun, enjoyment and free play:

> *... freedom to satisfy basic needs, of needing to dig, play in dirt and needing to climb.* (T6)

> *I don't like structuring them ... I like to leave them free ... I feel very strongly that you only have one childhood and it's a pity not to be able to be a little child when you can ... Let them sort of be as free as they can.* (T3)

The function of outdoors also was conceptualised in terms of promoting physical aspects of development: specifically in terms of physical health; the release of physical energy; and the development of physical and movement skills. Additionally, teachers thought children gain from the opportunities available outdoors to interact with other children, learning to play cooperatively, and developing communication and negotiation skills.

> *I think they achieve a lot of socialisation where they're mixing and talking and chatting and starting to enter into fantasy games and things like that.* (T6)

Again, however, it was clear that teachers believed this development occurred, for the most part, with little need for intervention or direction from teachers.

> *There are children who need some direction. Some idea of how to go about playing ... Now a lot of children pick this up by observing the other children and modelling them but there are some children who don't — so they need a little help.* (T4)

> *I like them to work out their own problems ... because they're fours and fives, they're not babies, they're not threes. If we are going to step in and solve their problems for them, that is not the essence of what I'm doing here. My aim is to help children communicate between each other.* (T1)

Taken together, responses to questions about the role of teachers and about the purpose and value of outdoor play suggest teachers conceptualised the outdoor setting predominantly in terms of its unstructured nature. To these teachers, outdoors was a setting where children's development proceeds as they play and interact with the environment and each other, relatively free of adult intervention:

> *... have an interesting and stimulating environment for them to play in and then they (the children) can work on their skills in that environment.* (T5)

> *(Teachers) provide equipment and activities so (the children) can interact with it and develop at their own rate ... let them use it how they want to.* (T2)

Teacher behaviour

Observations of children's outdoor play supported teachers' reports of their beliefs about their role outdoors. Although teachers were always present to supervise children, they were only observed in close proximity to target children in 28.6% of observations (Table 1).

Furthermore, when teachers were observed near target children, they did not interact with them in any way for almost half of these instances. That is, for 10.8% of the 28.6% of total observation intervals in which teachers were observed near target children, no involvement or interaction occurred. Of the remaining observations, the most frequent form of involvement by teachers in children's activities was making comments or conversing with children (4.4%) and managing children's behaviour by giving directions or reminding children of rules (3.7%). Teachers also were observed to give physical help to children (1.8%) by holding their hand while on a plank, getting pets from cages and hammering nails into timber at the carpentry bench when children were unable to do this themselves. Rarely were teachers observed playing with children (1.9%) or taking an active teaching role (1.6%) of extending children's play by asking questions, suggesting solutions to problems, or offering resources to children.

Caution is required, however, in interpreting these results relating to the amount of contact between teachers and children. Firstly, as the focus of the observation procedure was a target child, and not teachers, the results cannot provide an entirely accurate account of teaching practice. Secondly, although teachers were asked to behave as they normally do, it is possible that they purposely kept away from the target child being observed in the mistaken view that teacher interactions with the target child would be detrimental to the study. Nonetheless, these findings of limited contact between teachers and children outdoors are consistent with those of other studies, which have reported, for example, that few teachers considered they had a role in terms of intervening in children's play (Smilansky, 1990) and that teachers were rarely observed participating in children's play, indoors or outdoors (e.g., Brown & Burger,

1984; Creaser, 1989; File, 1994; Howes & Clements, 1994; Hutt et al., 1989; Wittmer & Honig, 1994).

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE OF TEACHER BEHAVIOUR IN CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Teacher Behaviour	%
No teacher present	71.4
Teacher present	28.6
* no involvement	10.8
* verbal comment	4.4
* behaviour management	3.7
* plays with	1.9
* physical help in play	1.8
* supports play	1.6
* care	0.5
* management of environment	0.5
* other	3.4
Total	100.0

DISCUSSION

The results of this research on teachers' behaviour and their conceptions of their own role relative to children's play in the outdoor environment need to be interpreted within the context of the small sample size and the specific socio-cultural region from which the sample was selected. Nevertheless, data obtained from teachers themselves and inferences from observations of their infrequent interaction in children's activities together suggest that these teachers appeared to hold relatively limited conceptions of their role in relation to promoting children's development in the outdoor setting.

The emphasis by these teachers on free play in outdoor settings, as opposed to greater teacher direction of preschool children's learning, is, to some extent, consistent with the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of early childhood education. It is possible, however, as other suggest (e.g., Brown & Burger, 1984; Gelenter, 1988; Hutt et al., 1989), that these teachers' attitudes of minimal involvement with children outdoors reflected a view of outdoors as a less important context for development than indoors.

Other factors, too, may contribute to teachers' attitudes and practices in these settings. These relate to the nature of the outdoor context itself and to the work of early childhood teachers. For example, teachers tend to have less control over the nature and organisation of outdoors in comparison to indoor environments (Schickedanz, York, Stewart & White, 1990). The size and fixed state of much of the equipment, as well as the natural features of the environment, can restrict the way in which teachers plan activities and set up other equipment. Often, too, the design of the environment has been executed in past years by previously employed staff and any improvements are usually complex and expensive. In addition, teacher control over the organisation and planning of the outdoor space can be limited when the area is shared by other teachers and their groups of children (Schickedanz et al., 1990).

Design features such as surfacing, storage and access to facilities can create particular difficulties for teachers (Davies, 1995; Gelenter, 1988). For example, grassed areas with insufficient drainage make it difficult to set up structured activities or messy play, and hard surfaces can restrict climbing and jumping activities. Inadequate storage may require staff to

frequently move large, heavy items of equipment, and poor access to facilities such as water can create further stress on staff. Under circumstances such as these, staff can feel disinclined to expend the energy required to plan an effective learning environment or to participate actively with children outdoors. Furthermore, the stressful nature of working with young children in child care and preschool centres may lead staff to use outdoors for their own relaxation while children play freely (Gelenter, 1988).

Teachers' limited conceptions about their role outdoors also may be indicative of a lack of familiarity with recent theoretical developments and associated research, which indicate the important scaffolding role teachers can take in promoting development (David, 1990; Monighan-Nourot, 1990). If this is so, then a focus in professional development programs on recent play research and developmental theories may serve to extend practicing teachers' understandings of the complexity of their role in the early education process.

At the same time, however, it is imperative that teachers do not become so enthusiastic about the potential of outdoor settings, and their own role in children's play, that they unintentionally undermine the value of the outdoor curriculum. For, as Fein (1985:45) warns:

> *In out well-meaning adult enthusiasm to leave no corner of the child's world untouched, we may touch this world so thoroughly as to destroy that which we are seeking to nurture. We may turn play into its opposite, another adult-dominated sphere of activity.*

To this end, it is important that professional development programs highlight the special significance freedom in outdoor settings can have in young children's developing motivational and affective orientations to learning. Outdoor settings provide extensive opportunities for exploration, active participation, choice and self-initiated activities: all of which have been shown to be crucial in fostering children's intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes to learning; and which, in turn, facilitate later performance in school settings (Grolnick, 1991). In addition, opportunities such as these enable children to experience a sense of mastery and control over their world, something which may be increasingly rare in contemporary society where children's lives appear to becoming more organised by adults.

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AUTHOR

Margaret Davies, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308. Specialisations: Early childhood curriculum, outdoor play, learning environments.

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AUTHOR

Margaret Davies, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308. Specialisations: Early childhood curriculum, outdoor play, learning environments.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF POPULARITY AT AGE FOUR

Sue Dockett and Sheila Degotardi
Faculty of Education
University of Western Sydney, Macarthur

ABSTRACT

Recently, within the field of early childhood education, there has been an increasing emphasis on the role of social construction of knowledge and on the inter-relatedness of aspects of social and cognitive development. This paper reports a study which investigated a proposed relationship between young children's popularity status among peers and a representational theory of mind.

In this study, 24 five-year-old children participated in a series of sociometric interviews where they were asked to rate their peers according to whether they 'liked to play with them a lot', 'liked to play with them sometimes' or 'didn't like to play with them'. These ratings were used to generate an overall likeability measure, which was then compared with a measure of performance on a series of false belief, appearance-reality and representational change tasks. Comparison of these measures indicated a significant correlation between the ranking of individual children as popular, or unpopular, by their peers and a measure of theory of mind. One explanation for this coexistence is that social interactions among peers provide opportunities for understanding of self and others and for explaining and predicting the actions of others based on mental states.

Teachers also were asked to rate the children in terms of perceived popularity. Comparisons of the ratings made by teachers and children indicate considerable differences. Possible reasons for this are discussed. Implications for early childhood education programs and possible avenues for future research are considered.

INTRODUCTION

In current research agendas, there is a focus on the connections between the areas of social and cognitive development, and on the 'inextricable' links that bind these (Erwin, 1993). This is apparent in the area of theory of mind research, where it has been noted that 'children cannot make much progress toward understanding everyday events involving people until they have some understanding of the mind' (Flavell, Miller & Miller, 1993:100).

Children's theories of mind, in the current research context, are described as understandings:

> *children have of their own minds and others' minds and of the relation between the mind and the world. This understanding enables children to predict and explain actions by ascribing mental states, such as beliefs, desires and intentions, to themselves and to other people* (Astington, 1991:158).

Theory of mind research has focussed on describing the developments that occur within the early childhood years as well as identifying and investigating situations in which children demonstrate an understanding of several aspects of this development, such as the appearance-reality distinction, false-belief and representational change. In each of these tasks, children who report the awareness of perspectives which differ from their own and who also report

changes in their own perspectives are regarded to have developed a representational theory of mind.

A substantial shift in these understandings has been described in the early childhood years. Between the ages of about four and six years, children develop the ability to create and refer to different mental representations of the same thing. This means that they can accept that other people may see and interpret things in ways which are different from their own and recognise that at different times, they will also represent things in different ways. These understandings are reported to be based on an understanding of the mind as an interpretive mechanism, rather than as a mechanism that faithfully reproduces the physical world (Perner, 1991).

The importance of positive social interactions among young children has been recognised for some time, with early childhood educators promoting the importance of peer interaction and recognising that social competence is based on being accepted and valued by peers (Curry & Johnson, 1990).

As the debate about how children acquire knowledge embraces the importance of social contexts and social interactions in generating socially shared understandings (Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1991), as well as the importance of the individual constructing knowledge (Piaget, 1965), attention has been paid to the types of social environments and interactions which promote such understandings.

Addressing this issue, recent research by Dockett (1994) has focussed on the context of children's play and the opportunities that this may provide for the development of understandings about the mind and mental functions. Finding that children who were involved in complex social pretend play were more likely than others to have developed a representational theory of mind, it was concluded that the social nature of play provides opportunities for children to negotiate, discuss ideas, resolve conflicts and extend upon imaginative themes (Black, 1989). Much of the success of these interactions depends on children's ability to consider the perspectives of others — the same ability as underlies a representational theory of mind.

This research also has considered the issue of children's popularity as a factor influencing the nature and type of peer interactions. Children who were regarded as popular by their peers, apparently, were accepted more readily into a variety of social situations and therefore, had greater opportunities to become aware of and to consider the perspectives of others. In contrast, children regarded by their peers as unpopular may have been excluded from complex play and so also may have been excluded from social situations which promote the consideration of others' perspectives.

In a recent discussion of the importance of peer interactions among children, Hartup (1996) has linked the notion of peer popularity with developmental outcomes, reporting that 'being liked' is associated with positive developmental outcomes and with 'being disliked' identified as a risk factor for future development. Being accepted as a preschooler has been linked to the development of social competence (Kemple, 1991), and conversely, being rejected as a preschooler has been linked to a recursive cycle of rejection and isolation that persists into later years (Katz, 1988).

This paper reports an investigation which aimed to investigate whether or not a connection exists between the two areas of children's peer popularity and theory of mind; that is whether or not children who are regarded as popular by their peers are likely to have developed a representational theory of mind. In the pursuit of this aim, teachers as well as children, were asked to rate each child in their group in terms of popularity. The results of this rating procedure and a consideration of peer popularity among a group of four-year-olds raises a number of implications for early childhood policy and practice.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised one group of 24 children attending the same preschool in metropolitan south-western Sydney. All children had attended the same full-day preschool since the beginning of the year and participated in the data collection phase during terms 2 and 3, 1995. The average age of the thirteen girls and eleven boys was 54.75 months, with the range being 45 months to 64 months.

Procedures

The study was conducted in four phases:

* orientation visits
* interviews with children to determine peer popularity
* interviews with teachers about children's popularity
* theory of mind interviews.

The first of these phases consisted of a series of orientation visits made to the centre by the research team. The aim of these visits was to establish a level of familiarity between the researchers and the children and to take the photographs of individual children which would be used in the second phase of the study.

Interviews with individual children formed the second phase. Using the procedure developed by Asher, Singleton, Tinsley and Hymel (1979) and modified during recent research (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud & Holt, 1990), children were shown photographs of their classmates (those taken during the orientation visits) and asked to name them and then to 'post' each photo into a box on which there were drawings of positive, neutral and sad faces. Before placing the photos into the boxes, children were asked to consider how much they liked to play with the child in the photo. They were asked to place the photo in the box with a happy face on it if they *liked to play with the peer a lot*; the neutral face if they *sometimes liked to play with the peer*; and the sad face if they *did not like to play with the peer*. A short procedural training session, using photos of play equipment, preceded this task.

The third phase involved the three staff at the preschool rating each child in the group according to their perceived popularity among peers. Staff rated children as either popular with their peers, neutral, or unpopular with peers, using the same criterion as the children, that is, did others like to play with the child a lot, like to play with the child sometimes or did they not like to play with the child.

The fourth phase consisted of a series of theory of mind tasks drawn from previous research in this area (Dockett, 1994). Tasks covered the areas of cognitive connections (Flavell, 1988); appearance-reality distinctions (Flavell, Green & Flavell, 1990) false belief (Perner, 1991) and representational change (Astington & Gopnik, 1988).

All interviews with children were conducted in a quiet area of the preschool, which was within sight of the other staff and children. Children were invited to participate in the interviews, which were conducted over a period of several days. Each interview lasted 10 to 15 minutes. Interviews followed a standard pattern, however there was the potential for the researcher to follow the interest of the child by responding to their questions or statements within the interview. Interview sessions were audio taped and transcribed for analysis.

Measures

For each child, several measures of popularity were generated from the data:

(i) the number of positive, neutral and negative nominations from peers;

(ii) a 'likability score', calculated by subtracting the number of negative ratings from the number of positive ratings and dividing this by the total number of responses (Denham et al., 1990);

(iii) a global or general rating, derived from the likability score (high, neutral or low);

(iv) general teacher ratings (popular, neutral, unpopular).

Each child's understanding of theory of mind was also calculated, using the following measures:

(i) responses by task (cognitive connections; appearance-reality – picture, toy, pretend and illusory object; false belief–own and others; representational change);

(ii) an overall score (the sum of correct responses to all theory of mind tasks);

(iii) a global rating, based on responses to theory of mind tasks requiring a representational understanding of mind (high or low).

The global rating (high or low) was calculated for theory of mind based on the number of correct responses for specific tasks. Children were rated as high in relation to theory of mind tasks when they successfully completed the tasks related to appearance-reality with illusory objects and false belief. Successful performance on these tasks has been identified as requiring at least the beginnings of a representational theory of mind. Such an understanding is not required to successfully complete the cognitive connections, picture, toy and action-based appearance-reality tasks.

Each of these measures was included in a correlational analysis, using SPSS-X. Data relating to the patterns of children's nominations were also analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Likeability ratings

Responses from children indicated that they enjoyed the posting box task and completed it with apparent ease. This response is consistent with previous research (Denham et al., 1990; Field, Miller & Field, 1994). Examples of responses to the task included:

Casey: I don't like Blake (places photo in box with sad face).

That's Dale. I like to play with him every day, cause he's funny (places in box with smiling face).

Mary: Greg (looks at photo). He's a really naughty boy ... (posts into box with sad face).

Terry: Oh! Casey (looks at photo). I like her a lot (posts in box with smiling face).

Mmmm. Mary (looks at photo). I love her (posts into box with smiling face).

Ella (looks at photo). I don't play with her at all (posts in box with sad face).
(Picks up another photo). Oh, I play with her all right. Only a little bit (posts photo into box with neutral face).

But I don't play with him at all (photo of Blake). He's naughty.

Caitlin: Andrew ... (posts in box with happy face) 'cause he goes to my dancing.

(Picks up next photo) Amy (posts in box with sad face) she plays with Evan.

Neil: Just sometimes I like Evan. Not when he's angry. He gets angry sometimes. When I hit him.

These responses suggest that not only do children rate their peers, but also that they use a variety of criteria when doing so. These criteria varied from 'liking the person', as indicated in Terry's responses, to participation in similar activities, as is evident in Caitlin's response (Field et al., 1994). Consistent with findings by Corsaro (1985), the children often highlighted personal characteristics of peers as the basis for their ratings. For example, Casey plays with Dean 'cause he's funny' and Neil will sometimes play with Evan but 'not when he's angry'. One characteristic often cited as a reason for not liking to play with a particular child was 'naughtiness'. In the limited examples above Blake is twice referred to as naughty and therefore as someone that these children do not like to play with. For some children, trends such as this became evident throughout the interviews.

Likeability scores for children ranged from +0.5 to -0.5. For the purposes of reporting, children were regarded as 'popular' if their overall likability rating was positive; neutral if their overall likeability score was zero; and 'unpopular' if there overall likeability score was negative. The patterns of ratings of peers are noted in Table 1.

TABLE 1

PATTERNS OF POPULARITY RATINGS.

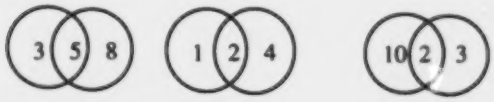
Gender	Popular	Neutral	Unpopular	Total
Boys	2	1	8	11
Girls	7	2	4	13
Total	9	3	12	24

The number of positive ratings for individuals (out of a possible 23 nominations) ranged from 4 to 16, while negative ratings also ranged from 4 to 16. The great variation in this was remarkable, with one child (Alice, aged 57 months) positively nominating only one child, while rating all the other children as ones she did not like to play with. The majority of these children also nominated Alice as someone they did not like to play with. This contrasted with Casey (aged 58 months) who positively rated 9 peers, rated 12 as neutral and negatively rated 2 other children. The implications of one child being actually disliked by a majority of peers, the reasons for such dislike and the influence of this on patterns of interaction is an area requiring further, more detailed exploration.

Comparison of ratings of staff and children

In contrast with the findings of Field et al., (1994), there was a notable lack of consistency between the sociometric ratings generated by staff and children. After calculating the global popularity rating, only 9 out of the total number of children (24) were rated by staff and peers in the same way. The breakdown of these similarities for children rated as popular, neutral and unpopular groups is illustrated in Figure 1. In this diagram, for example, 8 children had an overall popularity rating among their peers and staff rated 13 children as popular, including 5 of the same children nominated by peers.

Figure 1: Comparison of peer and staff ratings of children



Peer Staff
Children rated as popular

Peer Staff
Children rated as neutral

Peer Staff
Children rated as unpopular

In seeking to explain the discrepancies, profiles of two children who were rated differently by staff and children are included.

Ben

Ben was rated as popular by 2 of the 3 staff. Ben was nominated by peers as the least popular child in the group. Specifically, of the 23 other children in the group, 4 rated Ben as someone with whom they would like to play; 3 were neutral and 16 said they did not like to play with Ben.

On observation, Ben was described as being of average build, height and weight, with a physical stance which suggested confidence. He seemed to be rather loud and impulsive in his actions. He had definite ideas about what he wanted to do and what he wanted others to do. He was observed to hit other children if they did not do as he wanted. He did not like to be challenged by others and acted as a leader in play experience, telling others what to do. He was described by a member of the research team as having a 'roguish' personality and as 'walking a fine line between being a leader and being a bully'.

Caitlin

Caitlin was rated by all 3 staff as unpopular. Only 5 of her peers nominated Caitlin as unpopular, with most of them rating her as popular (13). There were also 5 neutral ratings.

On observation, Caitlin was described as having an Asian background and being a very quiet child. Mainly she played with Prue, the only other child in the centre who also had an Asian background. Interactions between Prue and Caitlin were reported to be friendly and positive. Staff suggested that Caitlin was dependent on Prue.

From these rough sketches of these children, it seems clear that staff and children rate popularity according to different criteria. For example, Ben demonstrated many leadership qualities which gave him an obvious power among his peers. This power, according to Corsaro (1985), would enable him to enter play without apparently being rebuffed by his peers. A cursory glance around the room by staff would certainly find Ben engaged in similar activities to his peers. Staff may have rated him as popular because they noted no evidence of him being rejected; rather they would see him actively engaged with other children (Dodge, Coie & Brakke 1982). This highlights the importance of noting not only children's engagement in experiences, but also the nature of the interactions within these.

Caitlin's shyness and quietness may have been the basis for staff ratings of her as unpopular. It is possible that children who are quiet, shy and withdrawn are often considered rejected. Yet, the quiet nature seemed to have presented more difficulties for the staff than for the children. Caitlin's interaction with one seemingly close friend raises an interesting question:

Do children need to have many friends to be considered popular? While staff ratings suggested that this was the case, the children apparently did not apply this same criterion.

Reciprocal ratings

To examine the reciprocal nature of peer nominations, each child's positive nominations of others were analysed according to whether or not the others returned the positive rating. For example, if Caitlin rated Prue as someone she liked to play with a lot, did Prue also rate Caitlin in the same way? In keeping with findings of Roopnarine and Honig (1985), definite trends relating to social networks emerged from this analysis. For example, in nominating children they liked to play with, popular children tended to nominate other popular children. Generally, the children nominated also made reciprocal nominations. In other words, popular children said they liked to play with other popular children, who in turn, also said they liked to play with them. On average, popular children positively nominated 8 of their peers and received an average of 5 reciprocal positive nominations.

Another trend was that unpopular children were often rated as popular by other unpopular children. However, whilst these children made an average of nine positive nominations, they received substantially fewer reciprocal positive nominations than their popular peersóan average of only 2.8.

One further trend was that almost all of the children wanted to play with the children who were popular. These findings suggest that popular children are more 'in tune' with their peers, appearing to possess greater awareness of the children with whom they are likely to have positive social interactions.

Considering the stated importance of developing a circle of friends in the early childhood years (Corsaro 1985), these findings suggest that compared with popular children, unpopular children have limited opportunities to engage in reciprocal interactions, where both parties want to play with each other. The nature of these interactions may also mitigate against opportunities for complex social play and the social and cognitive development which occurs in this context.

Theory of mind tasks

In responding to theory of mind tasks, children demonstrated many of the same patterns as identified in previous research (e.g., Dockett, 1994). For example, few children had difficulty with the tasks of cognitive connections, identifying that they did not know what was in a box if they could not see or hear it. Responses to the appearance-reality tasks which used illusory materials demonstrated either a clear understanding that one object could be represented in more than one way, or the conviction that the object (a) was really what it looked like, or (b) looked like what is was.

Popular children and theory of mind

The overall or global measures were used to sketch the connection between these two areas. As indicated in Table 2, children who were rated as popular were more likely to respond to the theory of mind tasks in a manner which suggested that they had a representational understanding of mind.

TABLE 2

GENERAL COMPARISON OF LEVELS OF LIKABILITY AND THEORY OF MIND TASK PERFORMANCE

	Global theory of mind rating	
Global rating of likeability	*High*	*Low*
Popular	6	2
Neutral	1	2
Unpopular	1	12
Total	8	16

Significant correlations were identified between the overall theory of mind measure (sum of correct responses across all tasks) and the number of positive ratings for individual children (r=.4797, p <.05). In addition, a negative correlation was identified between the overall theory of mind measure and the combined number of neutral and negative ratings (r= -.4769, p. < .05). A similar pattern emerged in relation to the global theory of mind rating (high or low), where this was significantly correlated with the positive ratings of individual children by peers (r= .4257, p. < .05) and with the negative ratings of individual children (r= -.5243 p. <.01). A summary of significant correlations between the global theory of mind rating and sociometric measures is detailed in Table 3.

TABLE 3

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN GLOBAL THEORY OF MIND MEASURE AND SOCIOMETRIC RATINGS

	Global theory of mind measure
Sociometric measures	*(high/low)*
Positive nominations (like)	r = .4257, p. < .05
Negative nominations (dislike)	r = -.5243, p. < .01
Global rating (popular/neutral/unpopular)	r = .4574, p. < .05

These results indicate that children who were rated as popular were more likely to use a representational understanding of mind, indicating the ability to consider the perspectives of others and to explain and predict actions on the basis of this. Conversely, children who did not receive many positive nominations form their peers, and hence were classified as unpopular or neutral, were more likely to respond to theory of mind tasks in a way which indicated that they did not consider the prepositives of others.

Analysis of these patterns on the basis of gender revealed a significant correlation between popularity and theory of mind for boys, but not for girls. For example, boys considered as popular were also more likely to use a representational theory of mind (r=.7271 p < .05) and boys rated as unpopular were less likely to use a representational theory of mind (r=-.6300, p < .05). While the results for girls were in the same directions as those reported for boys, the correlations did not reach levels of significance. The small sample size precludes more than speculation as to the reasons for this, however, it is an important issue to be considered in future research.

The only measure significantly correlated with age was performance on false belief tasks overall. Such tasks included questions relating to each child's understanding of their own false belief as well as responses relating to the false beliefs of others. In keeping with the results of previous research (Dockett, 1994), children who were older performed at a higher level on false belief tasks ($r = .4277$, $p. < .05$).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

While cautious about the generalisability of the findings from this limited investigation of the area, some patterns and issues have emerged which will guide future investigations and which have implications for policy and practice in the early childhood years.

In overview, the results of this study indicate that

* there is a significant positive correlation between children's performance on theory of mind tasks and their reported peer popularity;
* it is possible for four-year-olds to rate their peers in terms of likability; and
* by about the age of four, some children are already perceived as popular by their peers, whereas others are not so.

Each of these findings is important in a number of ways. In relation to the first of these, it is evident that there is a connection between children's popularity status–that is, whether or not they are liked by a majority of their classmates–and their representational theory of mind. This connection is more pronounced for boys than girls, although the reasons for this are far from clear and warrant further investigation. It may be, for example, that differences in the interaction styles of boys in general, as described by Black (1992), may influence popularity among peers, and hence also affect the social contexts in which boys engage.

The connection between popularity and a representational theory of mind reflects the importance of social interaction among young children in relation to both social and cognitive development. Through a range of social interactions, children can be alerted to the possibility that alternative views or perspectives exist (Bonica, 1993; Rayna, Ballion, Breaute & Stambak, 1993) and can engage in a number of strategies which show acceptance of these alternative views and so promote interaction. In addition, social interactions may promote the development of shared meanings or understandings among children. This is the basis of intersubjectivity (Göncü 1993) which can result in joint decision-making, joint construction of meanings and communication about these.

The potential for children to test out their ideas and understandings as well as to participate in the joint construction of knowledge in a social context is clear. In social interactions, children are likely to act in accord with their own theories of mind and to predict and explain the actions of themselves and others in accordance with the same theories. It is within the social context that children will be able to gauge the responses of others to their own actions and interactions and to use this as the basis for refining or adapting the strategies employed. The same context also provides a range of opportunities for children to develop a shared focus and to interact in a way which promotes a shared goal and the development of shared understandings.

The ease with which children involved in this study nominated peers according to popularity indicates that some patterns of social interaction were already well established. These patterns included the preference of all children to play with other children rated as popular; the likelihood that popular children would engage in social interactions with other children who also wanted to play with them; and the preference for children rated as unpopular to play with other unpopular children.

Several issues emerged in relation to the ratings. There was great variation in the ratings for individual children, with some strongly identified as unpopular and others as popular or

neutral. The implications of each of these types of ratings for individual interactions are enormous. For example, what are the implications of being regarded as 'neutral'? Does this suggest that some children are almost insignificant and that their presence in a classroom goes largely unnoticed? What is the impact of this on their social development? Further research of this issue will aim to investigate these and other relevant questions.

There was also a considerable difference between the ratings of staff and those of children. There are several possible explanations for this, however, it seems most likely that staff and children use different criteria to assess the popularity of children in a group, or that children and staff have differing expectations in terms of interactions.

A number of questions have emerged regarding peer popularity. One of these relates to the connection between popularity and having friends. Is being popular the same as having friends? Could it be that having a small group of close friends is as important as being popular among the whole group? Is it possible to have a close circle of friends, yet be regarded as unpopular in general by the group? These are some of the issues which will be pursued in further research in this area.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest that the social context of the peer group plays an important role in cognitive development. It may well be that the social context provides opportunities for children to engage in the joint construction of knowledge or to test out knowledge that they have already constructed. It is clear that children's social interactions are important to them and that they provide the context in which a range of understandings can be developed. Such understandings clearly include those relating to the mind and the role of the mental world in explaining and predicting actions and responses.

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AUTHORS

Sue Dockett is a senior lecturer in early childhood education at the University of Western Sydney, Macarthur. Her research interests include children's thinking, children's theories of mind and play.

Sheila Degotardi combines part time work at the University of Western Sydney Macarthur with research related to children's use of narrative and their developing theories of mind.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION IN THE INITIAL SCHOOLS YEARS

Pauline Harris and Jillian Trezise
University of Wollongong

ABSTRACT

The intent of this paper is to explore the notion of intertextuality as it is applied to the authors' ongoing inquiry into reading instruction in the initial school years. This research has involved the documentation of reading experiences in K–2 classrooms within the qualitative paradigm. Drawing upon multiple theories which frame the study and provide analytical tools, the authors examine some of the themes emerging from their work in terms of teacher mediation between children and texts.

INTRODUCTION

Consider the following transcript taped during silent reading time in a Year One classroom:

> Lenny turns to a page in his book which depicts a family tree with familial labels. He reads each label. When he comes to *nephew*, he turns to the adult assisting and asks:
>
> L: What does this word say?
>
> P: Nephew.
>
> L: Duckville.
>
> P: It says *nephew*.
>
> L: **Duckville.**
>
> P: It says *nephew* (pointing to the word *nephew*). See, what sound does it start with?
>
> L: /n/
>
> P: Uh-huh, /n/ for *nephew*.
>
> L: Yeah, and that's like Huey, Dewey and Louie, and they live at **Duckville** Donald Duck and I watch them on television.

This sequence reveals the difficulties which teachers and students may encounter when, in the absence of a mutually shared and understood history of texts, they fail to access each other's meanings. In the absence of the adult's experience with the Donald Duck texts, she failed to recognise and validate the child's implicit proposal of an intertextual relationship.

The intent of this paper is to explore some of the themes which have emerged from the authors' ongoing classroom-based research on beginning reading instruction in the initial school years. The paper draws upon both a preliminary study conducted over a three year period, during which time a group of 15 children were tracked through their first three years of school (Harris, 1992), as well as works-in-progress funded by the Australian Research Council. The particular concern of this research is the accessibility of the complex organisation of reading instruction to young readers, realised by explicit and implicit relationships among written, spoken and visual texts which constitute the intertextual fabric of reading instruction.

THEORIES OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Use of multiple theories

This paper, and the research it draws upon, is framed by a view of intertextuality as a constellation of theoretical approaches concerned with relationships between texts. These texts include written, spoken and visual texts. These approaches to intertextuality offer both theoretical explanations for textual relationships and analytical tools for examination of texts in relation to the larger system of signifying practices or use of signs in a culture.

Intertextuality conceives of our knowledge of texts as existing within a constantly changing network of intertexts, past, present and future (Morgan, 1989) and provides an array of tools and explanations which facilitate movement back and forth between micro-analysis, such as a single text within a classroom and macro perspectives of broader cultural conditions such as discourses of class, race and gender.

Kristeva's formulation of intertextuality

After Kristeva (1984), who is credited with coining the term 'intertextuality', the notion is used to signify the multiple ways in which a literary text echoes or is linked to other texts, whether by open or covert citations and allusions, or by the assimilation of the formal and substantive features of an earlier text, or simply by the participation in a common stock of literary and linguistic procedures and conventions. In this formulation, Kristeva initially drew on traditional psychoanalysis and the process described therein of transference by the analys and of meanings associated with the object of their neurosis to the analyst. Following from this, Kristeva developed a similar notion in semiotics and literary theory. Intertextuality was described as transposition, or the passage from one sign system to another through displacement and condensation and through altering of the thetic position or frame of reference.

Functional linguistics perspective of intertextuality

Drawing upon a functional language model (Halliday, 1985a), the notion of intertextuality is seen to encompass spoken and written texts with a view of lesson as intertext which provides or limits access to texts and discourses of lessons. Context is understood as the environment of text, consisting of both the socio-cultural system, which incorporates the behaviour potential for language users, and those many instances of the social system that occur as contexts of situation. Halliday (1985b:47) argues that a dialectic relationship exists between text and context, one creating the other:

> *'Meaning' arises from the friction between the two. This means that part of the environment for any text is a set of previous texts, texts that are taken for granted as shared among those taking part ... Every lesson is built on the assumption of earlier lessons in which topics have been explored, concepts agreed upon and defined; buy beyond this there is a great deal of unspoken cross-reference of which everyone is largely unaware.*

Aspects of this kind of intertextuality identified by Halliday include not only relationships to do with subject matter but also interpersonal features, such as underlying participant structures, coded expressions which act as signals for what is to happen next, and underlying intertextual assumptions about children's previous and current experiences and interpretations.

Halliday also identifies intertextuality at school in terms of the broader socio-cultural context of schooling. Lessons are bound together by the theories, practices, and values derived from this context and which impact upon pedagogic decisions and practices in the classroom setting. Any one instance of classroom interaction wherein a teacher chooses to validate or negate a child's response may be partly understood in terms of immediate goals and expectations, and more broadly understood in terms of the schooling context in which the teacher and children function.

A functional systemic linguistic perspective enables an analytic focus upon texts in contexts, to portray linguistically the classroom context of lessons wherein texts are read, shared and talked about. This leads to analysis of intertextual assumptions underlying lessons, linguistic patterns of organisation that connect reading lessons, and linguistic cuing of intertextual connections (verbal, gestural, prosodic, as well as artefact manipulation).

Combing semiotic and discourse theories

Dealing with semiotic and discourse theories together, intertextuality may be explained by linking single texts with broader bodies of texts. A discourse is a set of textual arrangements which acts to organise and coordinate the actions, beliefs and subjectivities of people who are the same time in the process of maintaining or producing it. One of the key effects texts have is to provide a context in which other texts are read and understood. They suggest metalingual cues through which a text's codes may be recognised and understood, and they link up with the contextual function through which a text indicates the context in which it is operating (Thwaites et al., 1994). This can indicate how a culture functions and is represented. One text never functions in total independence from others.

Just as a text's structure is influenced by similar texts both in its production and in its apprehension, so too are readings shaped by the same process. Texts, readings and the cultural values they support and enact are historically placed. Intertextuality facilitates going beyond the understanding of texts and the subjects they produce in interaction with human beings as static single objects, to a view of textuality, subjectivity and culture as processes of social reproduction and change. In particular, our study uses this perspective to consider the readings made manifest in teacher mediation between children and texts at school. This leads these researchers to examine the impact of intertextual history upon how individuals insert themselves into or resist different implied positions, and upon the intertextual relationships and assumptions they construe and can access in the classroom.

TEACHER MEDIATION BETWEEN TEXT AND READER

Readers bring to texts their histories of immersion in particular discourses which predispose them, for example, to certain interpretations of text (after Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). When young children in Davies' study (1989) were confronted with texts which deliberately construct a subject position different from those constructed in the dominant discourses, the children failed to detect and/or accept this position. Rather, they adopted a position oppositional to that in the text, influenced by the dominant discourses in which they were immersed. One of the tasks of successful reading is learning to detect the reading position offered by a text and deciding whether to accept or reject it. At school, readers who have been immersed in the dominant discourses are at an advantage over those who are not, with important implications for access, equity and success at school.

However, in the initial school years, it is common practice for the teacher to act as a mediator between children and written texts during lessons such as shared book experience. This intersubjective mediation means that children do not work directly with the written text but rather with the spoken interactions about those texts. Further, this mediation is not only text-driven but also framed by a teacher's pedagogic goals, beliefs and assumptions about children as literacy learners — which, in turn, are shaped by the socio-cultural context of school.

Shared reading lessons as intertexts

Analysis of such interactions, documented in this inquiry through audiotaped transcripts and observational field notes, has revealed a complex of intertextual links whereby such lessons are organised: constituting a text (a spoken text), they explicitly and implicitly relate to the focal written text, to other written texts and to previous classroom interactions. In classroom reading lessons, the notion of intertextuality has been found to be all-embracing of spoken, written and visual texts.

Our classroom data have also revealed that the substance of these intertextual relationships may be realised at varying levels of graphology/phonology, lexico-grammar and semantics, as well as embracing connections across contexts. In any one lesson, there often was found a

continual moving from one level to another as relationships were drawn out. For example, in a shared reading lesson which focused upon 'Crocodile Beat' in a Year One classroom, the teacher continued to move to and fro between these levels, drawing out relationships between: the text and other texts in the series; visual and verbal texts in the book; rhyming and rhythmic features of the text; and initial consonant blends of words in the text and display charts in the classroom.

The intertextual relationships organising reading instruction were seen to be cued both explicitly through verbal interactions and implicitly through body positioning, intonation, gestures and the arrangement of the physical context. These are instances of 'coded expressions' to which Halliday referred (1985b). Lessons such as shared reading are organised by a complex of relationships which children must access to make meaning and participate effectively; further, they are linked implicitly by virtue of their organisation and underlying rules for participation, thereby requiring children to access what may remain implicit. Children are positioned by what is selected, proposed, taken up and validated — and not validated — about the particular text at hand.

Intertextual relations were seen to be achieved through social processes. That is, relationships are proposed, recognised, taken up, acknowledged, validated and ascribed significance through the running commentary a teacher provides and negotiates with the children, questions a teacher poses and through the reiteration, interpretation, written recording and evaluation of children's responses (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). For teachers to be able to recognise children's perspectives, they needed to access their intertextual intentions and histories. When this understanding was present, and when children's responses were congruent with teacher expectations, responses were validated and ascribed significance. In the absence of this understanding on the part of the teacher, a child's response was ignored or explicitly negated. On closer reflection of such responses in the data, and after follow-up conversations with the children, it was revealed that children's responses in these instances were appropriate if not sought by the teacher.

To illustrate these findings, consider the following excerpt from a shared reading sequence in a Year One classroom:

Teacher props big book *Shuffle Shuffle Rhyme Chime* on easel.
T: Move closer, children, so you can see the book.
[Children move closer.]
T: Where do we have the 'jingle jangle' words?
Some children: There.

The display of the focal text highlights the significance of the text as the lesson's focus, as may be construed on the basis of other similar lessons. The teacher's question linked the lesson to a previous lesson when the 'jingle jangle' word list was established. The use of 'we' in this question may be seen to imply shared knowledge of the 'jingle jangle' text, its location and its connection to what has preceded and what is to follow this lesson. The request can only make sense in this context and to those who participated in the previous lesson.

The text's rhyming structures influenced the interactions and activities surrounding it as the lesson continued:

T: What words rhyme with 'jingle jangle'?
[Children raise their hands.]
T: Jimmy.
J: Mangle
T: Mangle. [Teacher writes 'mangle' on 'jingle jangle' list.]

Here, the simple raising of children's hands reflects links to other lessons of similar formats with underlying participant rules. The teacher's recording of 'mangle' signals implicit validation of the child's response. As the lesson continued, there were also occasions of explicit validation:

T: Susan.
S: Dangle.

T: Very clever! That's the one I was thinking of. I was thinkingabout it this weekend.
[Teacher adds 'dangle' to the list.]

Here, the teacher has imposed her own interpretive frame of reference upon Susan's contribution. It remains unclear whether it is appropriate and it certainly reflects assumptions about Susan's experiences and intentions.

T: I thought of that when I was dangling my teabag at home on the weekend. Annie.
A: Single.
T: Single.
[Teacher adds 'single' to the list.]
T: Were you looking at the cheese, were you?
[Annie does not respond.]
T: Kraft Singles.
[Annie gives a small nod.]

Annie was more tentative than Susan in acknowledging the teacher's interpretations of her response. The teacher's question, 'Were you looking at the cheese?' draws rather cryptically an intertextual connection between 'single' and 'Kraft Singles' and again reveals assumptions the teacher has brought to this lesson about these children's experiences outside the classroom.

Validation of children's intertextual contributions in shared reading

The question of validation is important to children's success at school; to what degree this validation is expressed in appropriate terms congruent with children's experiences and interpretations will effect its impact upon children. Clearly, the teacher is in the position of granting and withholding acknowledgement and validation (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993) but it would also seem to hold true that children need to be able to recognise the teacher's frame of reference to know that they are being validated. Annie's tentative nod above (and follow-up conversation by the researcher) indicated that Annie did not recognise the teacher's link, but went through the motions nonetheless of 'acknowledging' it with a nod.

The concern with validation, and consequences for equity and access at school, continues to be a major theme emerging from our data to date. It raises the question, 'What happens when children's intertextual proposals and responses are not validated?' Such an occasion was illustrated at the beginning of this paper, in the case of Lenny. It was not the case that Lenny's response 'Duckville' was inappropriate, nor did it reflect a misconception. What the excerpt does reveal is that children's responses may be misconstrued as 'misconceptions' because they are not the responses sought or anticipated by the teacher at a given point in time.

The following extract further illustrates this point and is taken from observational and transcript data recorded during a reading sequence in a Kindergarten classroom. The focal text was 'Meg's Eggs' by Helen Nicholl and Jan Pienkowski. This text is being shared with the class following its introduction the previous day. The teacher selected a section from 'Meg's Eggs' to read to the class, without showing the illustrations:

T: Listen to this.
[Reading]
'Lizards and newts, three loud hoots, green frogs' legs, three big eggs.'
What does that sound like?
Cathy: Like a rock-a-bye.
T: It doesn't sound like something that would put me to sleep.
Edward: It's a spell.
T: What is a spell?
Sarah: It's magic.

And so the lesson continued in its intended focus upon spells. But what of Cathy's response and, more significantly, the teacher's response to Cathy? It is evident from that data that Cathy's response did not match the teacher's anticipated intertextual link between the verse

and the notion of spells. Edward's response did match this agenda and so was taken up and validated by the teacher. Yet, on careful reflection, we need to consider Cathy's intertextual perspective. In Cathy's interviews, it was revealed that Cathy participates as a reader in rhyming books at home. She talked at length and very freely about nursery rhymes such as 'Round and round the garden' and identified patterns of similarity among these kinds of texts. Her familiarity with rhyming texts explains her response, 'Like a rock-a-bye', itself a nursery rhyme, identifying an analogy between such a rhyme and the spell text which also rhymed. Furthermore, Cathy encountered rhymes at bedtime, further consolidating the association with lullaby rhymes.

In light of these insights into some of Cathy's intertextual history, the teacher's response, 'It doesn't sound like something that would put me to sleep', failed to recognise and therefore validate the quite sophisticated level at which Cathy was at that moment functioning in terms of her intertextual understandings.

This excerpt also highlights the transient nature of teaching and learning processes frequently revealed in our classroom data — in particular, the fleeting moments wherein children often reveal very significant understandings. These may too often be missed in the pursuit of intertextual agendas which may impose adult frames of reference upon children's utterances and experiences. For example, in the sequence of documented lessons focusing on 'Meg's Eggs', it became clear that the intertextual resources which the teacher sought to focus on and develop were recipes in cookbooks. Whilst the focal text as an intertext linked to other texts in the 'Meg and Mog' series, as well as to narratives about witches, these relationships were not given weight during these lessons. Rather, the focal text was linked to recipes by virtue of the teacher's intertextual agenda to link spells with recipes. Underlying this agenda is a set of assumptions about children's familiarity with recipes and cookbooks and the exclusion of more obvious intertextual resources such as fantasy narratives and traditional fairy tales which many children reported reading in their interviews.

Responses like those of Cathy and Lenny should not be dismissed as 'misconceptions' (it may be the teacher who has not understood) but, rather, taken up and explored with the child so mutual understanding is reached. If such negotiation can be conducted during the course of shared reading experiences, then children would have the benefit of access to a range of different points of view rather than just the one driving the lesson at hand. Understanding children's intertextual histories and using this knowledge as a basis for planning will also assist the effectiveness of such discussions. Over time, it would be hoped that the complex and multifarious relationships among texts, uttered by children in an instant and not ascribed significance, would be made more explicit and enrich children's experiences as readers and literacy users. Further, it would lend validation to diversity of experience while permitting explicit access to those texts and discourses valued by school and critical to success therein.

The withholding of validation, albeit due to lack of insight in such transient but quite critical moments, may have an accumulative impact upon children's participation at school. In the case of Lenny, such instances were frequent and he became increasingly marginalised from such lessons. This marginalisation was made manifest in his choice to physically sit apart from his peers on the mat, his reluctance to volunteer responses, and his observed behaviours and quiet, self-directed talk which acted out his own resistance at the time such lessons were in train.

In the case of Cathy, for the remainder of the particular lesson on 'Meg's Eggs', she made no further contribution. However, for her this was not a consistent pattern. When in other lessons her responses were validated by the teacher, her participation continued. Her interview data nonetheless stood in contrast to her participation in formal lessons, in so far as she articulated her understandings of relationships among texts much more elaborately than the format of lessons allowed. Here, too, is another implication for classroom practice: that we as teachers provide contexts which enable children to demonstrate what it is they know and understand.

We also need to recognise that in certain situations, such as shared reading, there are constraints which may limit what it is children are able to contribute and what it is teachers

recognise and therefore validate. It has emerged from our data that different classroom contexts provide varying degrees of freedom for what is able to be made explicit or manifest. For example, the documentation of small group interactions which follow teacher-led whole class lessons reveals children's proposals of intertextual links not to written texts but to the audio-visual texts they view on television and VCRs, which were not brought to bear in the observed lessons. This raises another issue to do with the privileging of written texts at school and the need to validate children's intertextual histories which embrace different media.

Children's and teachers' perspectives of intertextuality

Across the classroom data and interview data with children and teachers, trends have emerged in terms of the differences between the kinds of relationships among texts perceived and valued by teachers and children. Children articulated their understandings about intertextuality in terms of:

similarities among book characters
their judgements about book types (e.g., 'funny', 'scary')
the membership of books to a recognisable corpus of texts
textual features such as rhyme and repetition
links with their personal experiences
setting
common authorship

Teachers, across the classroom data, were seen to use the following as the most prevailing intertextual resources:

membership to a recognisable corpus of texts
links on the basis of grapho-phonic similarities and differences
links to previous and forthcoming lessons
text innovations
links on the basis of genre
links amongst written resources on display

These trends in the data which indicate these differences point to the need for teachers to examine their own intertextual agendas and assumptions, and the degree of congruence with children's experiences and frames of reference. Children are positioned in classroom discourses which are shaped by underlying agendas and assumptions. Identifying assumed knowledge and questioning this in terms of what is known about children's intertextual histories provides a basis for opening up access to lessons such as those documented in this paper.

IN CONCLUSION

Classroom discourses by and large reflect the dominant discourses of a given culture and historical context. Beginning readers without access to these may not detect and/or accept the positions constructed therein and so success at school may be undermined. To succeed at school, it seems that children need to be able to shift across interpretive frames and discourses and insert themselves in the implied positions at school. In any classroom, it is anticipated that only some readers will take up readily available positions because discourses differentially position according to hierarchies of power including race, gender, age and class. That this is so remains to be further substantiated in the inquiry at hand.

Children's positioning in teacher-mediated encounters with texts is an important issue and, in order to be able to recognise, reject or accept positionings in the classroom, a reader needs to be able to access the dominant discourses found in the classroom. It is inappropriate to assume that all children can access these discourses, given the diversity of backgrounds represented in classrooms which reflect the cultural diversity of our society. As educators, we need to understand the intertextual and discursive histories children bring to the classroom and how these shape their interpretations of lessons and written texts there. It is also possible to make available other discourses to expand choices. These issues are critical to equity, access and success at school and in the broader socio-cultural context of society.

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AUTHORS

Dr Pauline Harris, Early Childhood Education Program Director, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522. Specialisations: Early childhood language and literacy, early childhood curriculum and programming K–2.

Jillian Trezise, Early Childhood Education Program Director, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522. Specialisations: History of education, in particular history and philosophy of early childhood, feminist theory, administration of early childhood services.

LOVE, CARE AND POLITICS IN LOW INCOME EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS: THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Susan Hill and Ann Veale
University of South Australia

ABSTRACT

This four year long longitudinal study traces the development of student teachers' constructs about becoming a teacher in three settings: child care (or day care), preschool and the early years of school. The study explores the development of student teachers' attitudes and expectations of young children from low income backgrounds where children may be disadvantaged by poverty.

The study was framed around three questions:

(1) What is the genesis and early development of early childhood preservice teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning?
(2) Are there patterns of constructs found between individual and groups of students in different early childhood settings?
(3) Are there differences in disadvantaged and advantaged early childhood settings?

In the first year of the study, student teachers' constructs regarding work in child care centres, both before and after the child care practicum, were mapped.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to raise and explore issues from the data collected in the first year of the study.

Issues arising from the first stage of the study

Some issues which emerged from the first stage of the study included student teachers' concerns about personal and professional dilemmas about what it means to work in day care. A further issue was the lack of, or invisibility of, socio-political awareness in the statements made by the preservice students. Related to the lack of socio-political awareness was a concern to explore the kind of courses that may best prepare student teachers for early childhood education, particularly work in child care.

This paper explores issues to do with working in day care and the socio-political awareness of student teachers, in particular:

* What are the personal and professional dilemmas for student teachers who work in child care?
* Do 'low income' families use child care?
* Why does the issue of poverty appear to be invisible to student teachers?
* What pedagogy is required for developing courses that can make a difference to students' values, attitudes and expectations in early childhood education?

Background to the study

This study explores the development of student teachers' constructs, attitudes and expectations of young children from low income backgrounds. Many educators have argued that teachers' actions and classroom decisions are largely driven by their perceptions and beliefs (Spodek, 1987). Theorists have suggested that much of the pedagogy of early childhood education is consistent with middle class mothering which may be in conflict with working class mothering (Bernstein, 1975; Tizard & Hughes, 1984). Thus, early childhood education may legitimise particular kinds of experiences like the middle class child's experiences while creating discontinuity and conflict for children from low income homes.

Katz and Chard (1989) suggest that the early years are fundamental for later development. If teachers' thought processes and actions are ideologically driven, as suggested by Apple and King (1977), and Bernstein (1975) then it is important to map the development of the values and constructs in preservice teachers as they undertake practicum placement in child care, preschool and junior primary schools.

The construction of a professional identity in the area of early childhood education has traditionally been driven by the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1989) and behaviourally or psychoanalytically-guided psychology (Bloch, 1992). Child centred ideologies, for example, developmentalism, individualism, play as learning and the concept of childhood innocence, have been instrumental in early childhood teachers' construction of the learning environment.

These child centred ideologies are often framed around 'freedom to develop into rational adults' and 'play in a natural country garden' which, by the way, is usually romanticised as a country house 'of the aristocracy or the idealised rurality of natural life (swains and shepherdesses) and not the poverty-stricken farmland of peasants and farm workers (Walkerdine, 1984:179). Many child centred ideologies may conceive children disadvantaged by poverty as less successful or using non-appropriate behaviour in early childhood settings.

There is little research on how knowledge and thinking about teaching develops in early childhood settings and few studies on how preservice teachers develop knowledge and constructs about teaching in early childhood centres and schools where children may be disadvantaged by poverty. In a review of research by Kane (1993), it was suggested that most studies of teacher thinking and ways teachers gain knowledge have involved experienced teachers rather than preservice teachers, thus failing to provide insight into the genesis and early development of teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning.

It is important to study preservice students' constructs about teaching young children disadvantaged by poverty as these children do not achieve as well as other groups in early literacy development (Crawford, 1993). The early childhood years are critical because they lay the foundations for literacy and future school success (Morrow, 1992). Historically, the years of early childhood have been looked to for solving problems associated with juvenile crime and social unrest (Walkerdine, 1984). The development of teachers' knowledge about teaching and learning in preservice teacher education programs has traditionally ignored what it means to teach in contexts where children are disadvantaged by poverty (Christie, 1991).

The House of Assembly Select Committee Report on Primary and Secondary Education (1993) claimed that teachers are poorly prepared to cope with students with a wide range of learning needs and those disadvantaged by poverty or race. Recent surveys of early childhood teachers in disadvantaged schools revealed that teachers may hold deficit views regarding the achievements of young children (Badger, et al., 1993). Teachers were also found to have low expectations for children disadvantaged by poverty (Hill, 1992).

Student teachers traditionally prefer middle class practicum settings and actively avoid practicum placements in disadvantaged schools because they prefer to teach children just like themselves (Zeichner, 1993). Paradoxically, student teachers are more likely to gain employment in low income schools because of high staff turnover in these areas.

In this study, the constructs of the students are analysed using the approach devised by Kelly. Kelly (1955) defines a construct as a way in which things are construed as being alike or different from others. He suggests that a person's construct system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs which allow an individual to predict, manage and control events to varying degrees. Each person actively constructs a representation of aspects of reality as a result of experiencing and interpreting events. The constructs precede actions and help determine what actions to take. This is a similar notion to that of Argyris and Schon (1975) who claim that 'theories-in-use' occur when teachers act because of their thinking processes and belief structures.

Research methodology and research plan

Our research plan involves comparing the development of constructs as students participate in three different early childhood settings over four years. Twenty preservice, early childhood students were invited to participate in the study as it was determined that this number would provide data of statistical significance when analysed with the computer program, Repgrid, which is based on Kelly's construct theory. Kelly's personal construct theory is clearly articulated in a model known as Kelly's Repertory Grid. According to Kelly, persons revise their constructs as they take into account feedback from their environment. These constructs can be mapped using the Repertory Grid.

As the study progresses over four years, the 20 students will be placed in a range of low income and medium to high income early childhood settings. The low income or disadvantaged child care centres, preschools and junior primary schools often use criteria such as percentage of sole parents, percentage of unemployed care givers and family income levels to apply for additional government assistance.

Each student will be asked to participate twice during three practicums. The students will create Repertory Grids during the first week of the practicum and during the final week of the practicum. The Repertory Grid data will be amplified by tape recordings made by the students during the beginning and final weeks of the practicum. These tape recordings ask the students to expand on the grid's information and reflect on the progress of their experiences in their own words.

Data collection each year will be 40 Repertory Grids, collected twice from 20 students and 40 30-minute tape recordings. In the following two years, 40 grids and 40 tape recordings will be collected. Note that the practicum placements change each year. So, in year one, data will be collected from child care settings (children aged birth to five years), in year two-kindergarten or preschool (children aged three to five years) and in year three — junior primary school (children aged three to five). There will be 12 sources of data for each preservice student.

The computer program based on Repgrid allows an examination and contrast of the similarities and differences between individual students and groups of students across child care settings. In conceptualising possible elements for the Repgrid, the researchers drew on work of Diamond (1991), Veale (1989), Saracho (1986) and Spodek (1990). The actual elements and constructs were generated with 80 students in a pre practicum lecture. New lists of constructs and elements will be generated for different settings in successive years.

The elements were:

(1) about acceptance by the children

(2) about getting along with the staff

(3) about my flexibility in handling chaos

(4) about the long hours of work

(5) about being exploited

(6) about travel to and from work

(7) that I may be too emotionally involved

(8) that my life experience may be devalued

(9) about finding what's wrong with babies and responding to them

(10) about matching appropriate activities

(11) about routines at the centre, e.g., nap time

(12) about being able to manage children's behaviour

(13) about health, hygiene and disease

(14) about toilet routines

(15) that when children throw a tantrum, I won't know what to do

(16) that I do not understand children with disabilities

(17) that I do not know how to comfort parents and babies

(18) that I am concerned about understanding children who cannot talk

(19) about keeping children safe

The constructs were:

	Basic Pole	*Opposite Pole*
(1)	Challenged	Vulnerable
(2)	Anxious	Exhilarated
(3)	Useless	Helpful
(4)	Able to cope	Unable to cope
(5)	Feeling watched over	Independent
(6)	Patient	Impatient
(7)	Trusted	Not trusted
(8)	I'm doing it right	I'm floundering
(9)	Unclear about expectations	Clear about expectations

Using the Repgrid

The students contributed the 19 elements that form the basis of this analysis. They put forward the elements as aspects of the anticipated new experiences that were concerning them. The elements were written across the top of the computer screen and students then ranked nine constructs with regard to each element. The constructs represent the range of feeling tone dimensions which students expected to feel. Between the two contrasting positions, the student could identify the position which best expressed their personal standpoint, such as 'challenged .... vulnerable'. The resulting choices were recorded as numbers 1 to 5 in a table. students each recorded twice, before and after their placement. The difference between their first and their second responses yields a numerical difference which indicated where students have shifted in their personal position. These shifts before to after the placement show the altering effects of the practicum experience on their thinking.

Findings

There were four elements where students showed the most changes in their confidence as registered by Construct 2. These were in order of magnitude:

Element 9 About finding what's wrong with babies and responding to them.
Element 18 That I am concerned about understanding children who cannot speak.
Element 13 About health, hygiene and disease.
Element 2 About getting along with the staff.

In all of these matters, the students moved from the anxious category toward the exhilarated situation registering feelings of competence and success.

In the case of Element 1 — 'about acceptance by the children' — and Element 5 — 'about being exploited' — students perceived themselves as making changes in Construct 5 which measures their progress in autonomy from feeling that they were being watched over towards independence. Together with the effect of Element 6 where students moved ahead on Construct 4 in their ability to cope with travel to and from work.

To sum up, by their own measures students had made significant changes in confidence with regard to issues which they had been concerned about before the practicum. These issues were identified as elements in which 8 out of 19 students themselves registered their improvement in confidence. The biggest increase was for Construct 2 with the highest ranking Element 9 — 'about finding what's wrong with babies and responding to them'.

The issues arising from data collected in the first stage will now be discussed.

The personal and professional dilemmas about working in child care

When the transcripts were analysed, the issue of personal and professional dilemmas arose for most students. The students' comments are presented here.

> *I want to teach. I do not want to baby sit.*

> *I thought it would be more like changing their nappies, just feeding them and putting them to sleep ... they actually teach the children something ... they subtly teach them things while they're playing.*

> *In my kindergarten placement, the staff only showed affection to the children when they were hurt or missing their parents (whereas) in the child care centre they just went up and hugged the children whenever they wanted to and the children did exactly the same thing. It was more like a parent/child relationship rather than a student teacher relationship, which I was a lot more comfortable with.*

> *I think one of their key needs is attention. If you talk to them respectfully ... not just blasting them for something they've done ... It's like you might call* ***love*** *or* ***care ... you actually show a deep interest*** *... which means you don't get angry unnecessarily.*

There were political tensions between trained and untrained child care workers.

> *The people were nice but I felt out of place there ... like they didn't want me there. I was looked down upon because I was gaining more qualifications than they were.*

It is possible that the detailed child study required in the practicum subject may take attention from the social context and place the focus on developmental psychology and child centred pedagogy.

> *The written work was consuming!*

> *I never thought that a kindergarten teacher or a child care worker would have this much written work to do. I just thought you would teach the children and you wouldn't keep many records. There's so much writing that has to be done.*

Low income families and use of child care

The intention of this study was to explore student teachers' constructs as they engage in the practicum in low income and middle class income settings. However, finding information on which centres serve low income populations was extremely difficult.

Four government administrators in child care were approached by the researchers to find out which centres have a high proportion of children living in low income homes. In the end, individual centres were contacted to find out this information. The reasons for the difficulty of getting this information has to do with the fact that parents of young children in child care often travel to a centre near a work site. The data on income levels of the community surrounding the child care centre may have little to do with the parents' income levels. Interestingly, administrators in government schools and preschools talk openly about unemployment levels and income levels but many child care centres do not want to be labelled as serving low income communities. This makes invisible the struggle of some low income families working, sometimes in two jobs, and still not having enough money.

Briggs (1994) states that 500,000 (or one in eight) Australian children were estimated to be living in poverty in 1990. Australia and also the United States had the highest poverty rate when measured against other comparable OECD countries (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 1991a). According to the Brotherhood of St Laurence, families dependent on the single parent's pension have an income well below the Henderson Poverty Line. About 58% of solo mothers with dependent children are registered as unemployed. Solo mothers who do work may use child care or a range of other family child care services.

To calculate the number of children living in poverty who are attending child care centres, the Adelaide Social Atlas (1993), which lists low income earners as people over 15 years with an income of $12,000 or less, was used. The proportion of sole parents coincides with areas where low income earners are located. High percentages of one parent families generally coincided with those areas where housing trust accommodation is available.

The official data on percentage of low income households and low income earners with the percentage of parents who receive fee relief was compared. The following table illustrates the discrepancy between official figures and individual centre figures.

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF LOW INCOME EARNERS, LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND PARENTS RECEIVING FEE RELIEF

Name of centre	low income %	low inc. h/hold	% fee relief
A	38%	28%-	32%
B	38%	28%-	86.8%*
C	51-58%	51-62%	40%*
D	38-45%	28-40%	50%*
E	58%	51-62%	59.5%*
F	58%	62%	59.6%*
G	38-45%	28-40%	32%
H	38-45%	28-40%	31.7%
I	38%	38%	51-62%*
J	38-45%	38-45%	64%*
K	54-51%	28-40%	30%
L	38-45%	28-40%	***
M	58%	62%	50%*
N	51-58%	51%	50%*
O	38-45%	40%	22.3%

Low income = people over 15 years with an income of $12,000 or less from 1991 census.
Low income households have income of $25,000 or less.
Please note that the percentage of fee relief is calculated by the figure for operating costs and the percentage of this operating cost that comes to the centre in the form of government assisted fee relief.
*** Fully government funded.

To summarise, there are high percentages of low income families using child care and these figures are most accurate if the percentage of parents receiving fee relief is used rather than data on low income households. This is because parents often take their children to centres near their workplace.

The issue of poverty appears to be invisible to student teachers

Many of our students were placed in child care centres with a high percentage of families with fee relief. The development of students' professional identity reveals concerns to do with physical development and management of very young children. Concerns did not touch on socio-political issues. No students in the tape recorded responses commented on parents' lack of choice about work, the long hours and possible shift work that may be associated with low income earners. One student at a centre made up of 86% fee relief said:

> *I found it really difficult to see children coming in five days a week from 8.00 in the morning or 6.00 in the morning, even until 6.00 at night.*
>
> *We became their parents ... that's where it sort of changed from baby sitting to teaching because if you're with a child every day of the week for 10 or 12 hours then the child is having more contact with you than he is with his own parents. You are really raising that child and that's a hard factor to get a grip on.*
>
> *I know that child care isn't baby sitting but my head doesn't want to believe it or my heart doesn't want to believe it. I still see child care as baby sitting but I understand it's like raising children because you do raise them.*

A student in a centre with a high percentage of fee relief commented:

> *Maybe parents, mothers and fathers have to work but it would be much more effective if children were brought up at home. Some people are so busy getting a family life that they haven't got time to be at home to take care of the children. Some kids spend whole days there from morning to 6.00 or 6.30 at night five days a week.*
>
> *If you really care for your kids you should be able to put some time in at that age. You develop this strong character, a real sense of family values at home. A strong character is someone who knows themselves and can deal with the world ... and once you've lost that even if you've got the money it's gone.*

Another commented:

> *I went in with a bias, not against child care, but I felt really uncomfortable about it. I worked it through and talked to the Director. I came out feeling that we need to provide a home, a nurturing home a loving environment for the children. That's where they are and what other people think about it is irrelevant. They need to be loved and supported and nurtured through the process.*

The comments often reveal an idealised view of childhood. Implicit in this is a view that parents have enough money to spend time at home with children to develop children's character, values and attitudes.

Another student commented:

> *Some people are such horrible parents that it's better for the child to be in a rotten child care centre than to be home with their parents all the time.*

> *But I don't think that any child care centre or kindergarten can be anywhere near as good as that of the parent child relationship, if the parents enjoy the child ... but I think child care centres are a totally necessary facet of society.*

There was no mention of any direct experience with parents on the tapes.

What pedagogy can make a difference to students' unexamined values, attitudes and expectations in early childhood education?

It is possible that a traditional focus on child study draws students' attention away from the broader socio-political issues to do with poverty, families and young children. Socio-political issues must be addressed in beginning subjects in preservice teaching awards. Early childhood education is the foundation for future learning and it is important that children from low income families are not further disadvantaged by attitudes and expectations of future child care workers.

Summary

This study, thus far, has found that students' constructs did shift between the beginning and conclusion of the practicum. The major shift was in understanding babies and responding to them and understanding children who cannot talk. It is possible that students in the practicum are so concerned with procedural and technical skills that they may not respond to the context (Bennett, 1993).

Students who did discuss broader socio-political issues did so within a traditional, stereotypical framework of 'family', pointing out that children in child care may be further disadvantaged because their parents are not with them more at home.

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Ethical considerations

The students are not identified by name and the researchers will not be involved in the practicum supervision of the students. The research data will be confidential and not used for assessment purposes for the University Practicum assessment.

AUTHORS

Sue Hill is an Associate Professor, Early Childhood Education, at the University of South Australia. Her research interests are early literacy and cooperative learning.

Ann Veale is Head of School, de Lissa Institute of Early Childhood Studies. Her interests are the play experiences of young children and visual art education.

DIRECTORS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES: EXPERIENCE, PREPAREDNESS AND SELECTION

Jacqueline Hayden
University of Western Sydney, Nepean

ABSTRACT

The early childhood Director has been a neglected area of research in Australia. This study set out to address the gap in our understanding of Directors and the administration/management function in child care and preschool settings. Through a survey of practicing Directors and a series of follow up interviews with selected respondents, baseline data were gathered which identified the background, experience, means of recruitment, levels of satisfaction, training needs and other concerns of administrators in a representational sample of preschool and child care centres in New South Wales. While the increasing complexity of the role of the Director has not been reflected by training opportunities, wage allotments, time allowances, or government policies, Directors reported success at foraging out their own information and support resources. Despite difficulties, the majority of Directors reported a strong personal and professional commitment to the management role in the field of early childhood care and education. This paper reports the findings related to four areas: experience and commitment of Directors; levels of training; methods of recruitment and selection; and feelings of preparedness for assuming the role of Director.

INTRODUCTION

While structural components such as maximum group size, staff/child ratio and play space per capita are important indicators of the potential calibre of child care settings, it is becoming increasingly clear that 'process' components which make up the adult work environment have a powerful effect upon quality care in child care centres, and that the centre Director plays a lead role in developing and sustaining these processes.

Meanwhile, increased policy requirements, changes in funding procedures, frequent regulation reforms and increasing numbers of centres competing for clients and resources have greatly escalated the complexity of the task and the scope of responsibility for Directors. These changes have far reaching implications which have not been thoroughly researched. In fact, there is a considerable dearth in the literature on or about the Director's role and responsibilities in early childhood settings and particularly about the support and training needs of this group of practitioners.

This study set out to address the gap in our understanding of Directors and the administration/management function in early childhood settings which they perform. Through a survey of practicing Directors and a series of follow up interviews with selected respondents, baseline data were gathered which identified the background, experience, means of recruitment, level of preparedness and other issues related to Directors of early childhood services in a representational sample of preschool and child care centres in New South Wales.[1]

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Current research on quality in child care settings has moved from uni-dimensional check lists of indicators —staff ratios, group size, teacher training, space and equipment requirements (Roupp, Travers, Glantz & Coelen, 1979) to a more complex matrix which includes both 'structural' (measurable components of care giving) and 'process' factors such as consistency

of care (low turnover rate), the quality of child/teacher interaction, appropriate programming and a number of other variables which, in combination, reflect the 'adult work environment' or 'organisational climate' of a setting (Howes, Phillip & Whitebook, 1992). Recent literature is demonstrating how good management practices create an organisational climate which is related to staff satisfaction and high quality service delivery and how poor management practices have opposing effects (Jorde Bloome, 1992).

In this way, the calibre of the adult work environment is now recognised as a critical predictor of quality care for young children. One of the most damaging aspects of a poor work environment is the departure of needed specialists from the field. Myriad studies point with alarm to an excessively high turnover rate in child care (Whelan, 1993; Schom Moffat, 1991; Jorde Bloome, 1992). Turnover has been associated with poorer rates of development in children, lower scores on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (Phillips, 1987) and significant disruption affecting social and emotional advancements in infant and preschool aged children (Johnston, 1989). Turnover has also been associated with reduced responsiveness of caregivers and other reductions in caregiver/child interactions. Some of the derogatory effects of turnover stem from the lag time between staff leaving a centre and new staff being recruited. These lag times result in more work and increased stress for those who are still in the centre and inevitably cause a drop in morale, leading to a vicious circle of more turnover (Kontos & Feine, 1987).

Ryan has identified a financial cost to the community when turnover is high. She calculated that a turnover of 163 teachers from the field of early childhood education in Victoria in 1989 represented a loss of 'around one million dollars to train, not counting the loss of taxation revenue during their training' (Ryan, 1989:5).

The reasons for child care turnover have been reported extensively. Nearly all studies target the poor salary and low status associated with the field (see, for instance, Marx & Granger, 1990). More recent studies, however, are suggesting that the poor morale which precipitates turnover in child care settings is not merely the result of low wages but of other aspects relating to organisational climate (Whitebook, Howes, Phillips & Pemberton, 1989). The relationship of work environment to staff morale and turnover is particularly relevant in Australia where remuneration for child care specialists compares favourably to North America. Yet, despite their higher salaries, the rate of turnover for child care workers in Australia is as high or higher than counterparts with lower rates of pay and poorer working conditions. This implies that it is necessary to look beyond what Herzberg has called 'hygiene factors'[2] for causes of discontent in child care settings in Australia (Herzberg, 1975).

Sarros and Sarros analysed the types of burnout which lead to turnover and concluded that burnout is correlated to 'both organisational factors ... (and) the motivational needs of teachers to be challenged and rewarded by their work' (Sarros & Sarros, 1987). Similarly, in a study of 315 staff in long day care centres in New South Wales, 44 (11.3%) cited 'unresolved staff differences' as the reason for leaving their centre (Johnston, 1989). Staff conflict is associated with poor leadership and/or a lack of 'team work' in centres (Simons, 1986).

Whelan, meanwhile, identified management practice and heavy administration loads as one of the key reasons for the excessively high rate of turner of staff in child care centres in New South Wales (85% in two years). She concludes her extensive study of turnover by making recommendations for:

> *...flexibility and responsiveness in management style ... building a better staff-management team ... involving staff in decision making and other facets of good management practice.* (Whelan, 1993:71)

Sheerer and Jorde Bloom (1990) detail strategies which have been used by Directors of child care centres to reduce turnover. These include pre-hiring strategies such as carefully worded newspaper advertisements, interviewing that includes centre staff input and observation of the candidate interacting with children; and ongoing activities such as encouraging professional development, including staff in decision-making, providing flexible working conditions such

as job sharing, having a permanent substitute on staff and encouraging staff functions (Sheerer & Jorde Bloome, 1990).

Similarly, management theory from the corporate world has, in the past few decades, identified the primary importance of the on site 'leader' in creating a positive culture and developing motivation towards excellence in staff (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Sergiovanni, 1984). Morris (1981:2) compared staff turnover in primary schools where salary levels were consistent and found that:

> *Staff turnover was consistently higher at the less satisfying schools (and that) ... strong principal leadership emerged as a consistent factor in teacher satisfaction and motivation.*

The implication for child care is clear. Quality in service delivery is closely linked to the administration function of the early childhood setting and the Director is the 'key (person) to influence (both organisational effectiveness and) quality of care' (Caruso, 1991:20; see also Galinsky, 1986; Kelly, Croll & Godhard, 1989; Broinowski, 1991; Neugebaeur, 1989). The increasing recognition of the importance of the Director/leader calls for research about this role and about the characteristics of those who assume it.

In one such study involving 91 administrators, Croll, Lewis, Kelly and Godhard identified a number of common characteristics of Directors in child care centres in New South Wales. They found that child care Directors were older and more stable than other workers in this field. They worked long hours and had trouble fitting their responsibilities into a forty hour week. The average working day was nine hours and few Directors took a break for more than one half hour during the day (despite awards). Most time was reported to be spent on the less rewarding functional administrative and financial tasks at the cost of attention to program planning, child centred activities, staff development, parent development and other areas which were considered to be important by Directors. This study touched briefly upon the training support needs for Directors. The most outstanding finding was that the majority of early childhood Directors were not prepared for the increasing complexity of their role. The result of this lack of preparation and lack of support could be that crisis management prevailed. Meanwhile, the predominant child centred skills of the Directors were not being utilised as he/she spent larger amounts of time on other administrative tasks. This 'overload syndrome' may have caused Directors to forego professional development opportunities because they were loathe to 'take the time'. The authors of this study call for an investigation into ways whereby training and support for Directors could be increased (Croll, Lewis, Kelly & Godhard, 1993).

In his review of child care Directors in the USA, Caruso similarly noted the lack of training and support and concludes that:

> *It is very clear that Directors and other supervisors learn much of their supervisory craft through trial and error, experiencing great anxiety and, at time, pain in the process.*

He points out how the turnover rate of supervisors, although substantially lower than that for teachers or workers (average work span 5.5 years for Directors; 2.5 years for teachers; and 18 months for workers) was nonethless much greater than that for principals in the public school system (average span is 13 years).

It is clear that management/administration functions and the role and needs of the Director in child care settings warrant further investigation.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTORS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

This section presents the finding from the analyses of Directors' roles and responsibilities within four categories. These are:

* experience and commitment
* training
* preparedness
* recruitment and selection of practicing Directors

Specific questions covering each area are listed below.

Methodology

Surveys were distributed to the Directors of all child care centres and preschools in the inner city and Western Sydney regions (N = 427). Two hundred and one questionnaires were returned (47%). Two surveys were returned too late to be added to the database. Five respondents indicated that they 'had no Director'. Two respondents stated that the survey was not relevant to their service. One respondent did not have official approval to fill out the questionnaire. One hundred and ninety-one questionnaires were used to compile findings. Not all questions were answered by all respondents. Interviews were conducted with 55 Directors selected randomly from the sample. The purpose of the interviews was to probe responses to survey questions.[3]

Sample

97 respondents called themselves long day care Directors.
93 respondents called themselves preschool Directors.
1 respondent called himself/herself an administrator.

Total = 191 in survey sample

The majority of respondents were between 25 and 45 years old (N = 144). More than half were under 35 years old (N = 109). The respondents were predominantly female (male = 6).

Results

1. Experience and commitment of Directors

How experienced are Directors? How long have they been in their present position? How long have they been Directors? How long did they work in the field before becoming Directors? How long do they intend to stay in their present positions?

TABLE 1.1
YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION BY TYPE OF DIRECTOR'S POSITION

Category	Long Day Care	Preschool	Total
Under 1 year	26 (14%)	14 (7%)	40 (21%)
1–2 years	21 (11%)	16 (8%)	37 (19%)
3–5 years	33 (17%)	42 (22%)	75 (39%)
6 +	16 (8%)	22 (12%)	38 (20%)
Total	96 (51%)	94 (49%)	190 (100%

TABLE 1.2
YEARS IN FIELD SPENT WORKING AS A DIRECTOR BY DIRECTOR'S POSITION

Category	Long Day Care		Preschool		Total	
Under 1 year	18	(9%)	6	(3%)	24	(12%)
1–2 years	13	(7%)	9	(5%)	22	(12%)
3–5 years	35	(18%)	30	(16%)	65	(34%)
6 +	30	(16%)	49	(26%)	79	(42%)
Total	95	(51%)	94	(49%)	190	(100%)

TABLE 1.3
YEARS IN FIELD BEFORE BECOMING A DIRECTOR BY DIRECTOR'S POSITION

Category	Long Day Care		Preschool		Total	
Under 1 year	11	(6%)	17	(9%)	28	(15%)
1–2 years	21	(11%)	29	(15%)	50	(26%)
3–5 years	38	(20%)	25	(13%)	63	(33%)
6 +	26	(14%)	23	(12%)	49	(26%)
Total	96	(51%)	94	(49%)	190	(100%)

TABLE 1.4
INTENTION TO REMAIN AS DIRECTOR BY TYPE OF DIRECTOR'S POSITION

Number of years intending to stay in present position	Long Day Care		Preschool		Total	
One year from now	30	(17%)	21	(12%)	51	(29%)
Three years from now	30	(17%)	30	(17%)	60	(35%)
Five years from now	26	(15%)	36	(21%)	63	(36%)
Total	86	(49%)	87	(50%)	174	(100%)

Discussion

While the cohort overall has experience in a Director's role (76% of respondents have more than three years directing experience), an astounding 41% of Directors worked in the field for less than two years before taking on the role of Director. It appears that the demand for Directors outweighs the number of experienced staff and that many Directors have 'fallen into' this position with limited background.

The difficulties of moving into the position with relatively little experience in the field was emphasised in follow up interviews which were conducted with 55 Directors. When asked to give advice to students who aspired to take on administrative roles in centres, every Director interviewed (100%) recommended that students should teach at least two years before taking on a Director position. Many of these respondents had learnt this 'the hard way' (by taking on the role themselves before they were ready).

Despite this, the Directors are not only coping but are highly committed to their roles. Although over one quarter of respondents who answered the question about intention to remain at their present positions (N = 174) stated that they did not anticipate being in the same position one year from now, 71% of respondents indicated a commitment to remain in

their Director position for at least the next three years. The implication is that, despite identified areas of frustration, the majority of Directors appear to find their positions rewarding enough to envisage staying on.

While 76% of respondents have more than three years directing experience, only 59% have more than three years experience in the same centre. Of the 42% of respondents who have more than six years experience as a Director, only one half of those had been at their present centre for six years or more. Experienced Directors, it appears, have a tendency to change positions.

If, as Caruso and Fawcett suggest, only experienced supervisors are able to provide motivation and leadership to a centre, there is cause for concern that 40% of Directors in this survey have been in their present position for less than three years and that 80% of Directors have been in their present positions for less than six years. The implication is that many staff in child care centres may not be exposed to well experienced, role model Directors who not only possess technical competence but are able to provide inspirational leadership to the centre and to the profession.

2. Training of Directors

How much early childhood training do Directors have? How much administrative training do Directors have? How highly do they value the training they have received?

TABLE 2.1
LEVEL OF TRAINING

Training Specific to Early Childhood Education (ECE)	Total	
Category	No.	%
Two or more years	28	15
Three years	71	37
Over three years	84	44
No training specific to ECE	8	4
Total	191	100

TABLE 2.2
LEVEL OF TRAINING AND TRAINING SPECIFIC TO ADMINISTRATION

Training Specific to Early Childhood Education ECE	Also have Training Specific to Administration (No)
Two or more years	14
Three years	47
Over three years	53
No training specific to ECE	5
Total	119

TABLE 2.3
NUMBER OF IN-SERVICE COURSES COMPLETED

Number completed	Number of respondents	%
One	19	40
Two	10	21
Three	12	25
Four	3	6
Five	1	2
Six	2	4
Ten	1	2
Total	48	100

TABLE 2.4
RATING OF TRAINING

- 44% of respondents (N = 87) had taken some administration subjects as part of a degree or diploma.
- 49% of respondents (N = 99) had taken at least one in service course and 6% (N = 11) had taken some other form of administration-related training.
- 46% of those who had taken administration courses as part of their degree or diploma rated these courses as 'mostly useful' or 'very useful' (ratings of 4 or 5 on a Likert scale).
- 70% of those who had taken in-service courses rated these as 'mostly useful' or 'very useful'.
- 21% of those who had taken administration courses as part of a degree or diploma rated these courses as 'not useful at all' or 'not very useful' (ratings of 1 or 2 on a Likert scale).
- 5% of those who had taken in service courses rated these courses as 'not useful at all' or 'not very useful' (rating of 1 or 2 on a Likert scale).

Discussion

Pre-service training

Although administration courses as part of a pre-service degree or diploma have been recommended by a number of sources (Croll, et al., 1993; Whelan, 1993), 21% of those who identified this as their form of administration training rated it to be not useful. A further 33% rated this form of training as being 'somewhat useful' and 46% rated it as 'useful' or 'very useful'.

These ratings are much lower than those given for in-service courses of which 70% were rated to be 'useful' or 'very useful'.

The implication is that management and administration areas have more value when they are taught to practising administrators. Pre-service early childhood education students may be preoccupied with obtaining the knowledge and skills needed to teach and are less likely to understand the importance of administration subjects and/or to find the information relevant. Presumably, when these teachers become administrators (over half of them will not take on a Director's role for three years or longer), some of the course work will be outdated or forgotten.

The undervaluing of degree related administration subjects contradicts a recent report by Dockett (1990). Here, surveyed graduates from an early childhood course at University of Western Sydney, Macarthur, identified management subjects as those most useful to them in their present positions. Since many tertiary institutions may be offering a variety of course work under the rubric of management or administration subjects, research into content of subjects labelled 'useful' and 'less useful' is called for.

In-service training

In-service courses, when accessible, are valued by Directors. However, less than half of the Directors (49%) had taken any inservice course and 40% of these had taken only one. While participation rates seem low, the ratings for the value and usefulness of in service courses were high.

The implication is that Directors, on the whole, do not have access to training in administration and may not, therefore, be fully cognisant of the knowledge base and skills required to fulfil the complex roles of administering a child care centre. Despite their lack of formal training, Directors, as shown by the responses below, do not report feeling unprepared.

3. Preparedness of Directors

How much awareness of the duties and responsibilities of their job did Directors have before assuming the position? What were they most prepared for? What were they least prepared for? How were Directors oriented to their position?

TABLE 3.1
AWARENESS OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
BEFORE TAKING ON POSITION

Understanding of Director's position	Number	%
Yes	25	13
Mostly	121	65
Not really	38	20
No	3	2
Total	187	100

TABLE 3.2
ASPECTS OF DIRECTOR'S ROLE MOST UNPREPARED FOR

Aspect	Number of responses
Administration/financial management/waiting lists and enrolments	75
Staff conflicts/issues/management/development	53
Number of hours	49
Being responsible for everything	27
Parental demand	24
Demands from Council/Government Departments or Government policy makers/Committees	21
Ongoing developments	8
Communication	6
Nothing	5
Other	5

Respondents were allowed up to three responses to this question

TABLE 3.3
ASPECTS OF DIRECTOR'S ROLE MOST PREPARED FOR

Aspect	Number of responses
General time management and administration/financial management/paperwork	65
Teaching children	51
Staff issues	49
Parents	38
Programming	29
Everything	13
Policy development	7
Responsibility	7
Long hours	3

Respondents were allowed up to three responses to this open-ended question.

TABLE 3.4
HOW MADE AWARE OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF POSITION

Aspect	Number of responses
Written job Description	108
Watching my predecessor	77
Formal orientation	43
Informat discussions with employers	103
Informal discussions with others working there	87
Formal or informal discussion with other Directors	110
Through course work at university or elsewhere	51
Through in-services	77
I am learning by myself as issues arise	130
Other	22

Respondents could nominate as many categories as they wishes.

Discussion

Directors appear to know about the parameters of their role. Seventy-eight percent of respondents stated that they had a full understanding about their position, or that they knew most things about it before taking it on. They listed a number of means by which this preparation had taken place including formal and informal discussions with other staff at their centre, with other Directors, through written job descriptions, by watching their predecessor and through in service and university courses. Twenty-two percent of respondents however were not generally aware of all the roles and responsibilities of the Director's position before they took it on and, while only 2% of respondents stated that they had no idea what the position entailed, 130 respondents indicated that they were learning 'by myself as issues arise'.

A large number of Directors, however, was not aware of the substance of their role. In a related finding, the majority of respondents identified technical and human[4] as those which were most 'difficult' for them as new Directors. Other items for which Directors felt unprepared included the number of hours, or workload, and the amount of responsibility placed upon them. Parental demand was also cited as an unexpected pressure upon the new Director.

However, almost one half of the Directors rated technical and human factors of management as those for which they were best prepared. These are the primary forces which Sergiovanni describes as being associated with running an efficient organisation. The implication is that Directors, who come from the pool of teachers, have not had a chance to orient themselves to basic management functions prior to taking on an administrative position. Sergiovanni claims that these princapal functions of management have a generic base and are, thus, most easily learnt. Management functions which address client issues and public relations are more reliant upon content knowledge of the service (Sergiovanni, 1984). The implication is that a good generic manager can learn the 'trade' at the more basic levels of the management hierarchy, but a solid grounding in early childhood training and experience is needed to 'lead' in the higher areas. Perhaps Directors who felt most prepared at technical and human levels are those with less confidence in the knowledge base relating to early childhood education and vice versa. This theory warrants further investigation.

4. Recruitment and Selection

How did Directors achieve their positions? Why did they become Directors?

TABLE 4.1
HOW ACHIEVED POSITION

How achieved position	Number	%
Appointed	50	27
Applied	115	62
Other	20	11
Total	185	100

TABLE 4.2
REASONS STATED FOR BECOMING A DIRECTOR

Reason	Number	%
I was inspired by a role model	20	11
I felt I was a good leader	29	16
I wanted a change from teaching/a challenge	62	34
It seemed like a great job	10	6
To improve my salary	9	5
Just fell into it	25	14
To help out when no one else was available	5	3
Other	23	13
Total	183	100

Discussion

Perhaps the most critical data uncovered by this research is the reported reasons for becoming a Director. Very few are doing it 'for the salary' (5%). Sixty-seven percent of respondents were motivated to pursue their positions because of their desire for a change/challenge or because of positive impressions about the job or inspiration from a specific role model (11%). Twenty-two percent stated that they achieved the position by default and/or that increased benefits were motivating factors. Of these, 17% did not seem to aspire to a Director role but 'fell into it' or took it on when no one else was available.

The majority of Directors applied for their position and won a competition according to normal recruiting practices. Almost one third of respondents, however, were appointed to their positions without going through competition processes.

These data have some important implications. Firstly, it has shown that hygiene factors, such as salary, do not seem to be a major motivator for Directors. Secondly, they reveal that role models who can inspire and mentor new Directors are an important factor in recruiting to this role. Thirdly, it indicates areas in need of support. Despite the fact that specific training and credentials have not been available to Directors in New South Wales, a number have not only succeeded as Directors but have served as an inspiration to others. This pool of 'mentors' needs to be recognised, supported and rewarded to ensure their continued patronage to the field. Likewise, the Directors who 'fell into their role' or assumed it reluctantly are in need of training and other support mechanisms.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has identified the importance of a focus on the role of the Director in early childhood services and has provided base line data on the state and status of professionals presently occupying that role.

Sound management/administration practices reduce staff discontent, decrease turnover, create increased respect and status for the profession and significantly influence the quality of service delivery. Despite its importance, the Director's function in child care settings in Australia tends, still, to be considered as an extension of the 'head' teacher role. Child care administration has not been recognised as a skill area separate from teaching in child care centres and, as such, has not been allotted sufficient credentialising, recognition or rewards (Hayden, 1996).

One outstanding finding from this study is that administration in early childhood, while onerous and stressful, appears to be carried out by a committed group of professionals. Notwithstanding the long hours, the low pay and the lack of status and recognition, 71% of surveyed administrators in New South Wales stated that they anticipated remaining in their role for the next three years or longer. Research has shown that the nature of the work — particularly working with children and clients — is identified as being highly rewarding, despite other frustrations (Hayden, 1996).

Nonetheless, the expansion of child care facilities and the increasing complexity of administration functions is exacerbating the need to provide support for existing administrators and to develop an infrastructure whereby the pool of potential administrators is enlarged. The establishment of a post training certificate is seen as one way to develop the specialist image which this activity demands.[5]

Recognition of needs and development of programs can do much to ameloriate conditions in the field. There is a critical need for flexible, accessible in-service type courses of training for Directors and for a review of a career ladder, credentials and other reward systems which could inspire more commitment to the distinct role of administration. The constraints to the broad realisation of training of leaders in child care settings are great. Despite stated need by vast numbers of administrators and observers, the training programs may be too expensive and too exclusive of policy and other supports to be feasible as a widespread practice.

Final note

While much work is needed in this area, it is hoped that the information in this study has provided a preliminary step in the development of a quality oriented infrastructure for child care Directors. The most encouraging aspect of the research has been the identification of a strong foundation, upon which these infrastructures can be built, and of a group of committed and relatively well trained professionals, who overlook some of the less attractive hygiene factors of their position and reap satisfaction from the more intangible aspects of the work

itself. With such a dedicated group, the effort to support further development will not be wasted.

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NOTES

1. Further findings from this study which incorporate analyses of Directors' roles and functions; supports available to Directors; the degree and role of change for Directors and specified training needs are reported in Hayden, 1996.

2. Herzberg delineates two kinds of motivators for employees. *Hygiene* factors relate to the work environment and include 'perks' such as salary, office conditions, ascetics of the work place, status of the job. *Motivators* are factors which relate to the nature of the job — rather than the context in which it takes place. Motivators include ability to grow with the job, challenging activities, decision making responsibility and recognition for achievement. (Herzberg, 1975).

3. Interview findings did not differ from survey results. They did provide additional qualitative data which have been incorporated into the discussion/results sections of this paper.

4. This statement refers to a finding which is not reported in this paper. Respondents were asked to delineate their activies in terms of four categories (adapted from the 'hierarchy of management forces', Sergiovanni, 1984) and then to state which group of activities they found to be most difficult, most time consuming, most important and most rewarding.

   The categories were:

   Technical functions: relating to the operations of the centre — purchasing, budgeting, record keeping, filling out forms, writing reports.

   Staffing functions: dealing with staff and related issues such as recruitment, orientation and training, staff conflict, staff appraisals, scheduling.

   Client oriented functions: dealing with children and families; programming, planning, addressing quality of care issues, individual attention.

   Public relations: networking, dealing with the community and officials, providing a positive image, 'selling' the centre to parents and others, planning events such as open day. (See Hayden, 1996.)

5. The Canberra Institute of Technology has, since February 1995, been offering a *Graduate Certificate in Child Care Service Management*. This is the first and only such course in Australia to date.

AUTHOR

Dr Jacqueline Hayden is Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the Master of Teaching (Early Childhood) course at University of Western Sydney, Nepean.

TEACHERS COPING WITH CHANGE: THE STORIES OF TWO PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Alison L Kelly and Donna C Berthelsen
Queensland University of Technology

ABSTRACT

In this paper, the impact of change on two Queensland preschool teachers is reported. Twelve preschool teachers were given opportunities to record and describe their work within their specific teaching context, as well as within the wider contexts of the school campus and the educational and social system. A reflective journal was kept daily over a two-week period and entries frequently identified the influence that mandated educational change had on daily work. The keeping of the reflective journal and a follow-up conversation enabled the creation of teachers' stories about their experiences. In this paper, two of the stories are explored. The stories are illuminating and assist in an understanding of the dimensions and conditions of teachers' work, and of current issues impacting on early childhood education.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to develop a clearer understanding of the impact of mandated educational change on teachers' work experiences and to consider what responses are needed by teachers in order to cope with the growing complexity of the workplace. The research was initiated because of increasing evidence that teachers are under stress. Regular reports appearing in professional magazines confirm that teachers' work is increasingly demanding and complex. The pace of educational change has engendered concern in teachers at all educational levels, including those in early childhood settings. This research has sought to identify, as a first step, the issues currently impacting on early childhood teachers in their work.

Jordell (1987) noted that educational systems and structures have an important bearing upon teacher behaviour, theories, and beliefs. He proposed that teachers' experiences can be mapped on three levels: the classroom level, the school level, and the societal level. This model acknowledges the interdependence of the three levels whilst also recognising that events occurring at the broader levels (school and society) directly impact on daily teaching experiences. Jordell (1987) emphasised that teachers develop certain ways of teaching, survival and coping strategies as they accommodate changes occurring at the school and societal levels.

Teachers' work

Social changes and economic imperatives have severely challenged the teaching profession over the last decade within Australia. Proposals for educational reform have been linked to broader social, economic and political agendas and these have resulted in major organisational changes. In the report, *Focus on Schools* (1990), the Queensland Department of Education was influenced by knowledge about how modern organisations operated efficiently and effectively, and accepted that successful organisations are those which incorporate the capacity to manage ongoing change into their operations.

Schools are being asked to address a multitude of social issues in their curricula and this leads to pressures that crowd the teacher's day. Key functions of the Queensland Department of

Education's Social Justice Policy detailed in *Focus on Schools* (1990), included developing policies for students with special needs, Aboriginal and Islander education, gender equity, multicultural students and socio-economically disadvantaged students. Such policies are valued by teachers, but schools have been expected to implement new policies for the large part by using existing financial resources which have been inadequate (Westwood, 1991). Policy initiatives have meant that increased knowledge and skills are required by teachers to take responsibility for implementation, with a resultant increase in workloads.

The work of an early childhood teacher can be characterised by high intensity and by a multiplicity of interactions and relationships. Teachers work with many adults (parents, other staff, teacher aides, members of the school community and staff) and young children at various stages of development. The early childhood philosophy of education sees the origin of the curriculum as stemming from children's needs and interests across developmental areas, rather than through prespecifed and sequenced content in specific areas of knowledge. This type of curriculum is not common at other educational levels. Early childhood teachers believe that they frequently have to justify their educational philosophy and practice to other educators and the community.

Context for the research: preschool education in Queensland

In Queensland during the 1970s, steps were taken by way of election promises to create a preschool directorate within the Department of Education. A system of voluntary free preschool education for all four year-old children was introduced. The government established that preschools would be located on the grounds of existing primary schools but would operate as part of a Preschool Directorate. This represented a major innovation in the field of preschool education in Australia (Ashby, 1980). Preschool education in the 1970s enjoyed a high level of acceptance and support by the government and general community. It was accepted in the proposal for preschool programs that the curriculum would focus on children's developmental needs and would not be a downward extension of the primary school curriculum. A strong belief existed that if early childhood principles and philosophies were to penetrate the Queensland education system then preschools required the opportunity to demonstrate their potential. Rather than domination by a prescribed syllabus, preschool teachers were encouraged to be autonomous and develop their own program which best suited the individual needs of the children.

A peer-level advisory support system was set up and advisory personnel were drawn from the ranks of teachers. Ashby (1980) described advisers as peers who were readily available to advise, assist, counsel and provide constructive criticism to other preschool teachers. They were not a supervisory team who could order or demand obedience. They were there to assist the individual teacher in an appropriate way, be it by supporting the inexperienced teacher in adjusting to new situations, or by supporting and challenging the experienced teacher to try more complex strategies. Ashby (1980) noted that the maintenance of motivation among teaching staff and a focus on quality programs were of major importance. The capacity of any organisation to maintain quality depends on the enthusiasm, interest and innovation of the staff.

Research aim

This research aimed to develop an understanding of the nature of preschool teachers' work in a period of socio-political change and to identify issues and conditions in teachers' work which are generating concern and stress.

Research methodology

In exploring the work of the teacher in early childhood education, a methodology was needed that was sensitive to the lived reality of teachers in this field. In order to capture the subtleties of teachers' experiences, the methods used to collect and analyse data were associated with personal narratives or stories (Kuzmic, 1994).

Teachers shared their work experiences and reflected on how changes in the wider educational context had impacted on their teaching role. A daily journal, a diagrammatic representation of their teaching experiences and a follow-up conversation with pairs of teachers enabled the creation of personal stories of teaching experiences. The journal keeping was a valuable tool and provided a record of teachers' work and teachers' reactions and interpretations of events.

The conversations were an extension of the reflections recorded in the journals and diagrams. The participants were asked to reflect on the themes produced by the collective journals and to comment on their personal relevance. They were asked to consider and identify the changes they had observed in the wider educational context since their teaching career began, and to comment on the extent that these had impinged on their teaching role. Apart from this general guide, the participants controlled the flow of topics and were encouraged to extend their responses. The responses given continually informed the evolving conversation (Paget, 1983). Hollingsworth (1992) noted that conversational methods allow for continuous cycles of critique and knowledge construction.

Participants

At a series of preschool teacher network meetings, the purpose and the nature of the research was explained and teachers were invited to participate in the research. Twelve teachers employed in a metropolitan area agreed to participation. All of these teachers were women and they ranged in age from 26 to 61 years, with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 20 years.

This paper presents the stories of just two of these teachers because it was not feasible to present all 12 teachers' stories in the one paper. The stories of Bettine and Elizabeth were selected as the issues which they raised appeared to encompass the broad range of concerns identified by the wider group. The stories of experience of the two teachers presented in this paper were developed from the journal entries, the interviews and diagrammatic representations.

Research procedure

After accepting an invitation to be involved in the study, the teachers kept a journal focussed on their daily work experiences for an agreed two-week period, which was towards the end of a school term. They were also asked to diagrammatically represent their experiences at the end of the journal recording period. A month after the journal records were made, the participants were given feedback on their journals and participated in an interview. The interviews were a discourse between pairs of teachers and the researcher, and took place at the preschool centres. A total of six interviews occurred. The interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed.

The information from the journal and the interview transcription was integrated to tell a story of each teacher's experience and examined in the light of Jordell's (1987) forms of influences: classroom, school and societal. Exploring these teachers' views about the conditions and consequences of their work generated an understanding of their current teaching practices, and the effects of educational and organisational change on their teaching roles.

STORIES OF EXPERIENCE — TWO TEACHERS TALK ABOUT THEIR WORK

Bettine and Elizabeth: An introduction

Bettine is concerned about the future of preschool education. She recognises that at times she feels under pressure, insecure and uncertain about her work. Bettine is married and in her 40s. She has three children under eleven, and has to juggle her school commitments to accommodate family needs and lifestyle. Bettine completed her teacher training in Queensland, teaching at a high school before changing to preschool education. Her teaching experience covers 20 years, with 11 of those being in the preschool setting. She has been at

her current school for one term and teaches in the afternoon session only. The primary school, of which her preschool unit is a part, is situated in a lower socio-economic area and serves about 225 children. A special education unit is attached. The preschool unit is a single unit meeting the needs of about 35 children.

Elizabeth is extremely committed to her job and to the field of early childhood education. Elizabeth is in her forties, is divorced, and has four adult children. Elizabeth did her teacher training in Queensland and has a Diploma of Teaching and a Bachelor of Education. She has been teaching in the preschool setting for 10 years and has taught at her current school for four years. Elizabeth is the teacher in charge at this centre. This school serves about 430 children and the double-unit preschool has an enrolment of about 97 children. Recently returning from a year overseas, Elizabeth is astounded by the changes that have taken place in the preschool setting and in the Education Department in general. She believes that changes have occurred at an inordinate pace and that teachers are having great difficulty accommodating these into their daily work.

Teachers' experiences at the classroom level

For Bettine, the major concerns at the classroom level were related to time pressures, daily programming and planning of curriculum activities, and ensuring quality interactions with children and parents.

> *Time pressures are a definite stressor for me. My personal time is pressured as well. I am constantly looking at my watch. I have changed from running a full day session to running a half day afternoon session. I am finding the discipline of moving my full day program into two and a half hours each day quite telling. Upon reflection, I can see that I have been struggling to condense what I once did in an all day program into the smaller time slot, and it does not work.*
>
> *Interacting with parents and building relationships with them is important to me because it assists my knowledge and understanding of the children. I must admit though that despite my years of teaching it is often the parents who get me down, especially in the disadvantaged areas in which I have worked. I do all I can to support the children, but I cannot perform the role of a social worker.*

For Elizabeth, concerns at the classroom level relate to programming for children with special needs, keeping abreast of the increasing demands of the job and implementing programs based on children's spontaneous play experiences — a philosophy of learning she strongly believes in.

> *I find meeting the needs of children a challenge and I am very open minded about integrating children with special needs in the preschool. I have a positive view about integration and I think that it is good for children to have experiences with children who are different from themselves. A child who has Down Syndrome and two children who have extreme language problems are part of my enrolment. As well as trying to learn sign language, I am as part of my commitment to the children who have special needs, teaching songs in sign language to the whole group. I admit that I sometimes feel inadequate in this role. Lack of support is the issue. It is difficult to feel empowered when you are on your own.*
>
> *I value an event-based philosophy which has taken me years to develop. Much time is spent implementing ideas and collecting resources to follow up children's ideas. Unfortunately, there is nowhere for me to get feedback or support for this approach to develop my ideas further. The disbanding of the Preschool Directorate has meant that inservice workshops are no longer*

provided and this has stifled the skill and knowledge development of teachers.

Teachers' experiences at the school level

When reflecting on concerns at the school level, Bettine found additional teaching tasks a pressure. She found the increasing number of professional meetings demanding. Changes in the functioning of preschools within the school and education system were of concern and had an unsettling effect on her work.

> *I am involved in extra school events such as organising school camps and professional development meetings. Next week I've got a meeting on every single afternoon! I feel that I absolutely must attend because of all the rapid changes that are happening. If I don't go and have a say there could be a policy change!* In her journal she reflected on the week she just had, '*This week I had four night meetings to attend and I think I should learn to say NO more often.' The meetings may be network meetings, talks by early childhood experts, or school inservice meetings. I believe that even though these take up so much of my personal time it is vital to attend in order to keep abreast of current information. I attend conferences held during holidays to keep in touch with preschool and early childhood information. Now I believe we have to go to these and have a say otherwise we will lose everything.*
>
> *I am very concerned about the changes taking place and the stories that abound, including worries about transfers, discontinuation of holidays, and the future of preschool education. A job in a preschool was once very secure and supported. We feel vulnerable now. Teachers are worried and afraid. It is all the changes! Every time you speak to another preschool teacher they have another story about what is changing in the system and they are not nice stories, and so there is a level of fear. Early Childhood Consultants and Regional Preschool Officers were once available to approach for communication and support. There seems to be nobody fulfilling this role now, who do you approach now?*

Elizabeth is actively involved in school planning and decision making, but is finding it difficult adjusting to changes in support services within the system. Relationships with other colleagues and with parents are also identified as significant work issues.

> *I have always had a desire to be actively involved in the life of the school, but I am finding that the school meetings I am required to attend are never-ending. During the fortnight of the journal recording, for example, I began work at the centre at half past seven each morning, and spent nine of my afternoons at meetings, workshops, or home visits. Most evenings were taken up with school work, planning, and preparation for meetings. Lunch breaks were taken up with preparation and organisation.*
>
> *It is good that schools have been put in a position where the preschool has to be recognised and included in more school planning. Unfortunately, this inclusion often just means more work for preschool teachers. I have felt the effect of the huge jump from being involved in very little at the school to helping to write School Development Plans, Discipline plans and Human Relationship Education Policies. The extra workload is enormous.*

Teachers' experiences at the societal level

The major societal influences impacting directly on Bettine's work related to the emergence of child care centres and the changing needs of families and their care/educational requirements. The community's understanding of the importance of early childhood

education and curriculum also influenced Bettine's work and her perceptions of how her professional work was valued.

> *I understand the perceived threat of child care centres to preschool centres, and as a working parent I acknowledge that child care centres are attractive. Having children for time periods of 8.00–6.00 is very different from the preschool routine. It is very exhausting. Several children in my group attend child care as well and are very tired and easily frustrated during the preschool day.*
>
> *In terms of understanding the value of preschool education, I have experienced that many parents are not concerned with what happens at preschool. They think it is marvellous and enjoy the activities but believe that Year One is the crucial year. In Year One, the parents value the products of the school day such as work sheets. The Year One teacher is pressured to leave the play experiences and focus on work sheets as 'proper' work. Early childhood education and its value has faded away from the public eye. Once, it was really big time — it was important to the community.*

Elizabeth has identified how the political climate has impacted on the education system and the valuing of preschool education. She focuses on the need to advocate at the societal level for changes in the school and classroom settings so that teachers are supported in their efforts to provide quality education for all children.

> *It was politics that started the push for early childhood education and preschool centres, and that this was as a result of advocacy by strong people. The decision to disband the Preschool Division in the Department has many implications for the early childhood philosophy. It is upon the shoulders of preschool teachers to advocate for the maintenance of early childhood services. I hold the view that if preschool teachers believe in the needs of the young children they teach, then they have to take on the difficult task of being advocates. Many principals don't see the preschool as an educational institution or preschool teachers as educators, so this is not easy.*
>
> *When considering the focus of the Department, and the implementation of measures like the performance standards, I am bewildered. I have spoken to teachers in England who have found performance standards to be a thorough failure, and I cannot understand why our government would adopt something that is not working elsewhere. Implementing the standards will take up even more teaching time. Education is becoming more politically oriented and changes are occurring simply to satisfy the politicians. I try to practice what I preach regarding advocacy, and I write letters and arrange meetings with support centre staff to discuss the future of preschools.*

Teachers' diagrammatic representations of experiences

Bettine's perception of her work is diagrammatically presented in Figure 1. These issues were emphasised throughout her journal and interview discussions. Elizabeth's diagram of her work identifies the influence of many complex issues at each of the three levels. She has emphasised concerns related to meeting the needs of children with special needs, lack of support, workload pressures and political policies and constraints. Elizabeth's diagram is presented in Figure 2.

Reflections on the stories

The stories of these two teachers illustrate the effects that changes in educational structures and in the wider society have had on teachers' daily experiences. The role of the preschool teacher in Queensland is in a process of redefinition.

Bettine and Elizabeth believed that it was becoming increasingly difficult to meet their personal expectations about the role of early childhood education. The need to 'fight for the profession' was put forward by Elizabeth. She valued providing exciting learning environments for the children within an event-based philosophy of learning but her routine for planning this was becoming more and more crowded with other work demands.

Bettine and Elizabeth experienced more demands and responsibilities than they could comfortably handle. They were finding it difficult to integrate their work into the primary school organisational structure because they were used to considerably more independence and autonomy. They were unclear about their roles in relation to their associated school.

Predominant in the stories is that the role of early childhood teacher has been affected by the elimination of the Preschool Directorate in the Queensland Education Department. The loss of representation and practical support previously provided by the Department had resulted in feelings of powerless to contest school and social demands.

Coping with change and the work of preschool teachers

Kelly and Berthelsen (1995) produced a description of the sources of stress for preschool teachers. The major distinctive themes were time pressures, responding to children's needs, coping with non-teaching tasks, maintaining early childhood philosophy and practice, meeting personal needs, issues with parents of the children, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes and perceptions about early childhood programs. These issues are evident in the stories of Bettine and Elizabeth.

The effect of removing the advisory support staff and disbanding the Preschool Directorate has had a major impact on preschool teachers in Queensland. These teachers' stories indicated that the support previously provided by advisory teachers had been invaluable to them. This was especially true with respect to meeting the needs of children with special needs. These teachers currently feel ill-equipped to do this effectively.

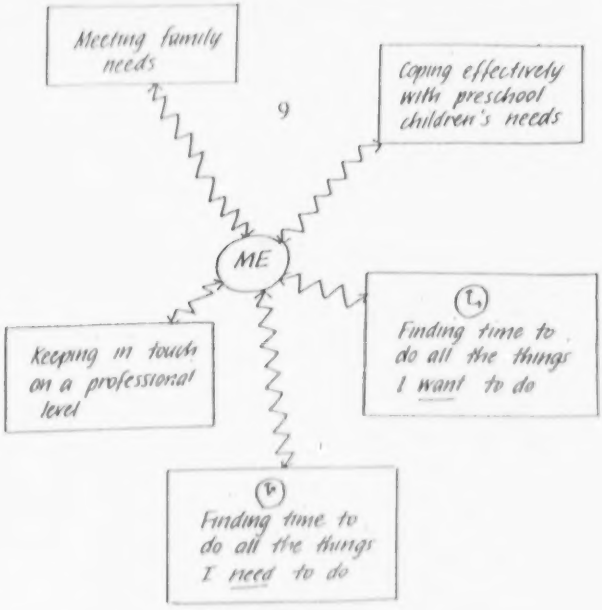
Meeting family needs
Coping effectively with preschool children's needs
ME
Keeping in touch on a professional level
Finding time to do all the things I want to do
Finding time to do all the things I need to do

Figure 1: Bettine's diagram of work influences

Ignorance of the developmental process and orientations of the preschool and of early childhood education
Community Attitudes
Fragmented Families
Time demands
Parent / Teacher Partnership
Policies and Actions of the Department of Education
Meeting the needs of children who have special needs
Availability and quality of support
Physical Demands
Workload Pressures
Administrative Leadership

Figure 2: Elizabeth's diagram of work influences

The 1990s has seen the reversal of the original framework and the foundations for developing preschool education in Queensland which was promoted in the 1970s. The professional autonomy of preschool teachers has been eroded, and the valuable support networks and advisory teams has also disappeared. These teachers believe that the field of early childhood education needs a voice at senior levels for input into higher-level, decision-making so that valuable early childhood philosophies and practices are not eroded in the broader educational system.

Rather than being reactive to the changes and pressures, teachers need to become more proactive. This may not be easy. Teachers need to be assertive and be able to articulate their concerns. Action may restore a sense of personal control. Many of the issues that these teachers faced were related to working effectively with other adults, including principals and parents. Teachers need to work collaboratively within their school context in order to build up support networks, as well as seeking professional supervision within their school. They also have a role to support their colleagues who may feel equally disenfranchised.

Teachers can focus on areas of their practice where they feel confident that they can make a difference. Dalton and Boyd (1992) proposed that teachers need to have the courage to be a part of an increasingly complex and demanding profession in which change is a constant. An acceptance of change and an awareness of the situations over which they do and do not have control is required. Instead of choosing to feel overwhelmed by the pressure of external forces, teachers need to focus their energies on the things they can do something about. From that base, they then may be able to enlarge their spheres of influence. Maintaining such a focus may help teachers to manage change so that it does not become overwhelming.

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AUTHORS

Alison Kelly, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. Specialisations: Early childhood teacher education; teacher stress and organisational change; teachers' work; early childhood teachers in child care.

Donna Berthelsen, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. Specialisations: Child care and children's developmental outcomes; staff experiences in child care.

A TEACHING AND LEARNING INITIATIVE USING AUDIOGRAPHICS-CONFERENCING SOME EMERGING ISSUES

Rosemary Perry, Gail Halliwell, Ian MacPherson and Susan Grieshaber
Queensland University of Technology

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a project which trialled the use of simultaneous telephone and computer (audiographics) conferencing to teach a Master of Education unit *Early Childhood Curriculum Design Issues* at the Queensland University of Technology in Semester 1, 1994. It outlines the reasons for the selection of the technology, describes the perceptions and experiences of students, lecturers and observers, and discusses the issues which emerged as efforts were made to ensure that the technology used promoted the desired pedagogy for post graduate early childhood students.

INTRODUCTION

It's 5.30 pm on a hot March evening and Lyn, Alice and Gayle are sitting around a computer screen in the Toowoomba Open Learning Network Centre. Laurie in Nambour and Gillian in Rockhampton are in similar situations. The visual computer links have been established and it is only a short time before they will be linked by telephone with each other and with two groups of seven and eight students at two sites on-campus in Brisbane. A lecturer is with each of the Brisbane groups and they are seated around a table looking at a large projection of the same slide which is displayed on computer screens at the off-campus sites. The slide is headed Messages and students at the various sites have been typing or writing notes to each other while waiting for the audio links to be established. It's the usual pre-class chat in writing form.

The loudspeaker telephone buzzes and the telephone operator announces that all telephone links have been established.

'Hello, Lyn and Alice and Gayle ... How are things in Toowoomba this evening?' asks Gail, the lecturer.

'Fine,' replies Alice, 'although it's storming quite heavily and Gayle thinks she might need to leave early if she's to get home before the creek comes up' ... And so the class combining students across on-campus and off-campus sites begins.

A number of factors led to the trial of audiographics conferencing in teaching a Master of Education unit *Early Childhood Curriculum Design Issues* within the School of Early Childhood at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Semester 1, 1994. In previous years, there had been an increasing demand from prospective students, living and working in country areas of Queensland, for access to post-graduate early childhood education. Most of these students were women. In an effort to provide equity of access to university courses for all students, a number of options was considered. The offering of traditional distance education delivery modes with the emphasis on written materials was not seen as desirable because contact between lecturers and students was limited and there were few opportunities for students to engage in critical discussion and debate. Such contact and critical discussion were seen to be important criteria for teaching and learning at the higher degree level and there was a determination by staff in the School of Early Childhood that the

quest for equal access to education would not be separated from the quest for high quality education for all students (Coombs, 1994). While some Schools introduced intensive summer and winter vacation study classes, attendance at such vacation programs was not possible for early childhood students because of family or work commitments.

In the early 1990s, with the development of instructional materials delivered via television, radio, telephone and computer directly into the home, there was growing recognition of the potential of technology to enhance equity of access to university courses (Farrell, 1994). Along with the recognition of the potential of technology to increase equity of access, however, came issues concerning which technologies are most appropriate to the preferred pedagogy for teaching and learning at the higher degree level.

As these issues were considered, it was apparent that, in spite of the occasional teleconference which brought students into contact with their peers, most models for off-campus teaching and learning were based on the assumption that packaged materials delivered to the student's home were the most desirable. Because these instructional materials could be sequentially organised, they were seen to give the student the opportunity to self-pace the study program. The increasingly sophisticated educational packages suited to the new technologies seemed to be based on a similar assumption with glossy instructional materials relying on techniques associated with behaviourist pedagogies.

With this forging of new links between education and information technologies, some educators (Bigum, Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1993) suggest that the point is being reached where the rhetoric of market forces threatens to turn universities into institutes of 'edutainment'. This can result in the passive consumption of information produced by ever more distant knowledge centres that aim to achieve a market size commensurate with covering the costs of production.

This trend has been noted with some disquiet (Lundin, 1991; Stacey & Turner, 1993; Smith, 1991; Evans & Nation, 1992) and is of concern to staff in the School of Early Childhood who hold the view that high quality higher degree teaching and learning involves students and lecturers collaborating in examining ideas and searching for new understandings and improved practices. Such a view requires sustained interaction and debate among students and lecturers providing opportunities for developing critical thinking skills and generative processing (Hannafin, 1992), problem-solving abilities needed for research (Renshaw, 1992; Bynner, 1986; Wells, 1993) as well as opportunities for learner control (Steinberg, 1989).

It was against this background in September 1993 that Early Childhood lecturers became aware of a new audiographics conferencing system installed in 42 Centres of the Queensland Open Learning Network (QOLN). This system had the potential for teaching off-campus students in way consistent with the collaborative and dialogic pedagogy valued by Early Childhood staff. Two lecturers felt motivated to trial such an approach and, with the offer of technical advice and support from QOLN staff, together with QUT's support for new initiatives in open access modes of delivery and the award of a QUT Teaching and Learning Development Large Grant, the trial in Semester 1, 1994, was made possible.

THE PROJECT

The aims

The particular aims of the project were to:

* promote equity of access to higher degree study through the use of interactive telephone and computer technologies;
* trial the use of audiographics conferencing to create teaching and learning situations where groups of students studying off-campus could engage in critical analysis of ideas;
* evaluate the trial, with a focus on student and staff experiences in using the technologies, and their perceptions of effectiveness of the teaching and learning that occurred; and

* disseminate findings of the trial in forms that would assist QUT staff and others investigating effective open access modes of delivery for higher degree courses.

Commencing the project

Enrolment of students:

Given that there was little time to advertise for off-campus students, contact was made with students who had previously enquired about external status and led to three students enrolling and attending the QOLN Centre in Toowoomba, while one student attended in Rockhampton and another in Nambour. Enrolments of 15 students in the on-campus class necessitated the use of two sites, one on the campus and the other at the QOLN Centre in Brisbane. A maximum group size of eight students was seen to be optimal for discussion and the use of the technology.

Equipment required:

Each of the QOLN Centres had the necessary equipment available: 486 computer; modem; conferencing software (Vis-A-Vis); graphics software (PowerPoint); scanner; printer; and high quality loudspeaker telephone. This equipment had to be purchased for the on-campus site.

Technical and production assistance:

With the part time employment of a production assistant who was responsible for advising on the use of software and assisting in the production of resources, many of the initial problems and fears of the lecturers were overcome. Basic techniques for establishing conference links, for using the scanner to prepare slides from photographs and other colour images, for preparing slides with Microsoft PowerPoint and for sending the slides 'down' to all of the sites had to be learnt. Lecturers, too, had to consider which of their normal class strategies could successfully be translated into the technology. Even becoming familiar with the use of the touch sensitive screen to display the slides and the centrally located loudspeaker telephone required practice.

Teaching staff:

The two lecturers who shared the teaching load allocated for the unit had no prior experience with audiographics conferencing although one had considerable experience in teleconferencing. The production assistant was an important member of the teaching team providing support not only with the preparation of the graphics but also assisting with the use of the technology during classes.

Unit content:

The aims of the unit were to foster critical reflection on appropriate knowledge sources for early childhood teachers and to stimulate critical inquiry into the knowledge teachers use as they work in Early Childhood programs. Consideration of the enduring themes, key ideas, recent research and debates surrounding and influencing Early Childhood curriculum theory and practice were important components. Examination of teachers' own personal and practical knowledge was another important component.

Teaching strategies:

The set topics were presented in ways designed to promote group discussion and were linked to issues raised by students. From the outset, the lecturers employed a discourse style they wanted students to use with each lecturer questioning points raised by the other, to foster debate and promote the notion of collaboration in learning. Humour, anecdotes of personal experiences and dilemmas were also used to highlight points. The aim was to promote a risk-taking environment where students felt able to voice uncertainties and scrutinise ideas and

assumptions enshrined in Early Childhood theory and practice. Reflective journal writing was encouraged as a means of assisting students to build connections and knowledge between the set topics and readings and their own practical and theoretical knowledge about curriculum.

Class formats:

Eight sessions of three hours duration (5.30–8.30 pm) were offered in place of the usual 14 weekly sessions per semester in order to assist those who had long distances to travel or who had heavy after school commitments. In the non-class weeks, students were required to fax or otherwise deliver reflective journal entries based on required readings. Although the general format for the three hour session varied, a typical session involved:

* a lecturer leading a discussion based on an overview of points from students' journals
* students raising issues, dilemmas from their own work situations or items of general interest for discussion
* prepared input from a lecturer on the topic set for the session presented in a way that evoked discussion and student input
* a coffee break
* the undertaking of a task separately at each site such as viewing a video forwarded prior to the session
* a 'coming together' for shared discussion stemming from the task.

In three classes towards the end of the Semester, students made presentations based on work for their final assignment. All the presentations were illustrated with computer slides designed by the students and produced by the production assistant.

Resources:

At the first session, students received a booklet (under 200 pages) containing a unit outline, the schedule for classes, details of required readings for each session, an annotated reading list and a set of required readings. The print materials were regarded as supplementary to the teaching program which was a reversal of the tradition of using audioconferencing to supplement print-based teaching materials.

Experiences and perceptions

Data were collected from students, lecturers and observers concerning their experiences. Students were invited to submit written reflections on their reactions after participating in selected sessions. In particular, they were asked to focus on problems they had encountered, the impact of the technology on their learning and suggestions and advice for the future development of the approach. Responses were received from eighteen students after Session 3, eight students after Session 6 and ten students after the final session. The two lecturers also provided written reflections after each session highlighting problems encountered, the impact of the technology on their teaching and their perceptions of student responses. Five observers who sat in on classes also submitted comments regarding the effectiveness of the teaching processes and the use of the technology.

Students' reflections

Feelings:

Most students reported positive feelings about their participation using words such as exciting, interesting, enjoyable, relaxed, friendly and productive. The opportunity to interact with other class members, both in their own and other locations, was noted as an enjoyable feature by a number of participants. The respondents off-campus were extremely positive about their experience in the unit. They were excited and enthusiastic about the technology and felt that the benefits they received outweighed the slight technical difficulties encountered. Students on-campus were also positive but not to the same extent. In the first

few weeks of the trial, some students reporting feeling 'intimidated' by the equipment and nervous about having to use the technology.

Problems:

Once the technical difficulties encountered at the Kelvin Grove site in the first session were overcome, there was little mention of technical problems apart from an occasional difficulty in hearing a speaker. The students in Rockhampton and Nambour each noted that, as they were the only students in their location, they were unable to participate in informal discussions during the allotted time for this. By Session 5, however, the facility to link two sites for small group discourse was discovered and the problem resolved. A Toowoomba student reported that having to travel an hour to reach the QOLN Centre was a problem for her, whilst recognising that without the audiographics conferencing facilities participation in a seminar class would not have been possible at all. One student reported problems in understanding the content and one found using the loudspeaker telephone a problem.

Impact of the technology on participation and learning:

Overall, students felt that their understanding had been broadened and significant learning had taken place. In particular, the opportunity to interact and discuss ideas and issues with others was valued. The audiographics technology was seen as having both positive and negative effects on participation and the effectiveness of the learning experiences.

Positive effects:

* The visuals were seen to be helpful and their preparation and presentation appreciated. Students felt that the technology had resulted in lecturers being better prepared and more information being presented in an interesting way.

* While the on-campus students appreciated having a lecturer present with them, off-campus students felt 'welcomed' and 'drawn in' to the discussions. The informal atmosphere and warmth of the lecturers were seen to contribute to this.

* One off-campus student reported that, when compared with other external study modes, the audiographics technology allowed for more active involvement and understanding of the topic through communication with others.

* One student felt that the technology made the student presentations both easier to give — 'It's actually good to be separated from other students — It's not so nerve racking' — and to listen to — 'It is also easier to concentrate on what is being presented, rather than the person.'

* Lack of eye contact was also seen as an advantage by some students: 'I find the lack of eye contact may in fact enhance concentration and intake of knowledge. Without the distractions of classmates, it's easier to concentrate on the spoken word and therefore simply take in and retain more.'

* A number of students commented on the motivational value of the use of the technology: 'I find the whole interactive process between scattered students and lecturers so stimulating and enjoyable I can only say for me — it works!'

  'I travel to Brisbane weekly for on-campus lecturers so can compare. While I enjoy the face to face contact with students lecturers, I know I've worked much harder in this unit simply because I wanted to be prepared for the inevitable '... and what does Nambour think?' The whole unit has taught me far more than my initial expectations — I've found it highly motivating seeking out further information on topics.'

Negative effects:

Students highlighted a number of factors which they saw as inhibiting or distracting to their learning.

* Having to use a loudspeaker telephone made some students nervous and hindered their participation.

* Some students reported being reluctant to contribute because they did not know the students at the other sites.

* Lack of eye contact with lecturers and other students, not being able to detect non-verbal cues and not being able to put a face to a voice were reported as negative aspects by some students. Finding difficulty in 'butting in' to a conversation to make a comment or ask a question was also reported to be a problem.

* Off-campus students missed the opportunity to develop rapport and friendships with lecturers and other students. In particular, they commented on the need for feedback after their presentations to compensate for the lack of 'nods and smiles to affirm our statements'.

* Having to check that they were being heard, having to repeat comments and not hearing some contributions distinctly were listed as minor irritations by some students. Because of such problems, these students felt they had to make more of an effort to participate.

* Two on-campus students felt that the technology 'limited group discussions and communication with the lecturer' that a 'classroom lecture could have been more stimulating and lively' and that 'inevitably, to discuss and debate through teleconferencing hinders our efforts in expressing ideas with others.'

Overall, however, students rated the sessions as being at least as effective as the conventional on-campus methods. Audiographic conferencing was rated most highly in terms of keeping students' attention and interest and in developing a class atmosphere conducive to learning and was seen to be least effective in terms of allowing students to discuss topics with each other.

Lecturers' reflections

The lecturers' reflections suggest that their feelings progressed from an initial state of anxiety about using the equipment to an enthusiasm for the benefits possible with audiographics conferencing. Initially, lecturers likened the use of graphics to overhead transparencies and found it reassuring to use a familiar teaching tool in an unfamiliar situation. The shared graphic also helped unite the students at the various sites and focus the discussion in a way not possible in teleconferencing alone. Initial technical problems with the equipment left the presenters feeling rushed and fatigued on occasions and the need for adequate technical support and infrastructure was strongly emphasised. As well, the need to develop and refine teaching strategies appropriate to audiographics conferencing was recognised. Whilst a pedagogy based around dialogue and the critical analysis of ideas was the aim, it was felt that technical constraints and inexperience had tipped the balance between giving information and promoting discussion in favour of the former, particularly in the early sessions. Although this concern was redressed to some extent towards the end of the Semester, more training, experience and understanding were seen to be needed if the potential of the technology was to be fully tapped.

Observers' comments

Comments made by observers were consistent with many of the lecturers' reflections with one observer noting that the teaching was tending towards the presentation of information rather

than stimulation of discussion. Observers of later sessions, however, commented on the high level of interaction being achieved and 'the good group feeling' across the sites, with the technology 'being experienced as a tool and not as a dominating influence'. Practical suggestions on how to increase the use of the interactive facilities such as the use of show-hide boxes and on-screen writing were also made.

EMERGING ISSUES

The reflections and comments of participants raise a number of important issues for consideration if audiographics conferencing is to become a more widely used mode of delivery in higher degree study.

Clarifying the pedagogy

The stated goal of the preferred pedagogy for the teaching of this unit was that students engage in the critical analysis of ideas through discussion with colleagues. It became apparent during the project that if the technology was to assist in achieving this goal there was a need to make more explicit some of the values, theories and assumptions upon which the goal is based. As outlined by Oliver and Reeves (1994a), from the early work of Piaget (1954), Bruner (1960) and Ausubel (1960), there has come the recognition that learning is enhanced in environments where students are actively engaged and are reflecting on their actions throughout the learning process. In keeping with this, the contemporary view of constructivism suggests that knowledge is gained through a knowledge building process. When faced with new information, the learner's intentions, past experiences and metacognitive strategies all play a part in determining what becomes of that information (De Vries & Kohlberg, 1987). It is this constructivist perspective that underlies the goal of promoting the critical analysis of ideas, for this kind of critical thinking requires students to consider, to compare, to make inferences, to determine implications and to reason (Hannafin, 1992). The kind of learning environment at the tertiary education level likely to promote this type of constructivist thought is one in which a variety of perspectives is shared, discussion moves beyond the reflexive and experiential level, risk taking is encouraged in a warm and accepting atmosphere and motivation is high. The importance of these factors is confirmed by the students' responses which highlighted aspects such as collaboration, warm and friendly lecturers and motivation as being important contributing factors to their learning in this unit.

In the light of this clarification of the pedagogy, a number of important factors can be identified which should be taken into account when considering the use of the technology and the development of teaching strategies.

* The provision of warm, accepting 'conference' environments and the establishment of a protocol to ensure positive relationships are enhanced and no group or person dominates.

* The use of teaching strategies which create an appropriate mix of student-initiated, lecturer-initiated and group-initiated discussion, reflection and collaboration.

* Effective communication skills and content knowledge on the part of lecturers enabling the kind of discussion which leads to the critical analysis of ideas through fostering students' abilities to move beyond anecdotal accounts and to compare, make inferences, determine implications and reason.

Using technology as a tool

Experiences in this trial suggest that it would be very easy to let the technology become the master and not the tool of the pedagogy. Although the need to access technical advice and support was acknowledged from the outset with links established with the QOLN staff and the employment of a production assistant, there were times, particularly in the initial stages, when the enthusiasm and time for teaching preparation by the lecturers were in danger of being swamped by the difficulties encountered in gathering equipment and ensuring adequate technical functioning.

In the initial planning of class formats and resources, a decision was taken by the lecturers that, where possible, previously used teaching and learning strategies consistent with the preferred pedagogy were to be adapted to the technology. The technology was not to dictate the strategies. Although at times the domination of the technology seemed unavoidable, such as when visual links broke down, at other times, this decision led to the use of the technology in ways which would not have been recommended in any training program! While success was not always assured as a result of this decision. the lecturers' explorations were guided more by the pedagogy than the technology and valuable insights gained.

Again, as a result of this project, factors can be identified that need to be taken into account in any future delivery of higher degree study using audiographics. These are:

* The provision of appropriate hardware, software and equipment well in advance of the starting date of the project so that successful functioning can be established.

* The availability of technical assistance in the preparation of materials and the use of the technology during classes.

* High levels of preparation and planning prior to sessions as well as responsive flexibility within sessions.

* Adequate technical skills on the part of lecturers and students and a preparedness to implement alternative strategies if technical 'glitches' occur.

CONCLUSION

In essence, the findings from this trial of teaching an early childhood higher degree unit using audiographic conferencing technology indicate that, provided the pedagogy is clearly articulated and the technology regarded as a tool in its implementation, the potential exists for the creation of effective learning environments and the enhancement of learning outcomes.

The combining of on-campus and off-campus students to form one class, while requiring further investigation, appears to have both benefits as well as benefits for students. Drawn from a wide variety of locations and workplaces across the State, students come together bringing with them differing perspectives and experiences. The fact that on-campus and off-campus students experience similar teaching formats, strategies and class resources aimed at high quality learning and teaching advances the notion of equity of access for all students. As more off-campus students reach the research phase of their course, however, new challenges concerned with ways of using technology to provide students with supervisory support and opportunities to become members of scholarly communities must be met.

If the audiographics mode of delivery is to be continued and extended, there will need to be a considerable realignment of support services within many institutions with less support being required in terms of print materials and more support and technical assistance from audio-visual and computing services. Although the use of audiographics conferencing is regarded by some as expensive compared with other interactive approaches in open learning, such as video conferencing and personal visits, it is economical and likely to become more so as the costs of basic equipment and charges fall with newer technologies and wider use.

In 1995, all units in the early childhood area of interest of the Masters program will be delivered using audiographics conferencing and an extended evaluation undertaken. For the early childhood profession, this initiative holds the promise of an increasing number of higher degree graduates living and working in various geographic locations, who not have in-depth knowledge of early childhood curriculum and policy matters, but who also have developed skills in critical analysis, enquiry and debate which enable them to deal with complex early childhood professional issues.

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AUTHORS

Dr Rosemary Perry, Lecturer, School of Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove. Specialisations: Early childhood teaching and curriculum, young children's play.

Dr Gail Halliwell, Senior Lecturer, School of Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove. Specialisations: Curriculum decision making, narrative enquiry into teachers' work.

Dr Ian MacPherson, Senior Lecturer, School of Curriculum and Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology. Specialisations: Curriculum studies, centrality of teacher in curriculum decision-making.

Dr Susan Grieshaber, Lecturer, School of Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove. Specialisation: Early childhood curriculum, family studies.

AN ENFORCEABLE CODE OF ETHICS: WHAT DO PRACTITIONERS THINK?

Lois Pollnitz
The University of Newcastle

ABSTRACT

This paper reports findings of a study which explores early childhood practitioners' thinking about the monitoring and enforcement of a code of ethics for their profession. Responses of over 200 practitioners to a postal questionnaire indicate a level of support for compulsory adherence to a code and an even higher level of support for the taking of action against those involved in code violations. Practitioners nominate the employer or professional associations as appropriate agents for such action. Implications for the Australian Early Childhood Association Code of Ethics are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Codes of Ethics

From sets of agreed core values, professionals develop codes of ethics which state the objectives and norms relevant to professions. These public statements of their obligations to clients include such aims as aspiring to ideals, maintaining standards, upholding principles and adhering to rules and procedures (Bayles, 1981; Rich, 1984; Sockett, 1990). According to Rich (1984:46):

> *Professional ethical codes ... are models of the kind of behaviour that professionals are expected to observe in their practice. Thus the model guides the practice and the professionalism of the practice is evaluated with reference to the models.*

The Australian Early Childhood Association, Inc. (AECA) Code of Ethics can be described as an exemplary code. Though it targets practitioners, that is, those personnel who work directly with children on a daily basis, the Code also applies to all personnel whose work relates to children. The Code is positively stated, includes guiding principles and avoids laying down rules of conduct. It explicates the responsibilities of early childhood personnel to each client group, that is, to children, families and the community, as well as to themselves and colleagues. The Code's guiding principles are written as statements that identify priorities and characteristics considered important in the provision of quality programs for children and families. The guideline statements also describe how early childhood personnel should conduct themselves in their relationships with others (Stonehouse, 1994). It is the Code's emphasis on what behaviour is right and good rather than expedient and practical (Katz & Ward, 1978) that assists early childhood personnel to make appropriate decisions when confronted by ethical dilemmas.

Enforcing Codes of Ethics

Codes of professional ethics are understood to be part of the formal agreement made between professionals who provide services and clients who are beneficiaries of services (Coady, 1991). As such, codes assume a level of contractual status which implies that professionals have an obligation to adhere to codes and that clients can expect some kind of redress when codes are violated. The appropriate professional associations usually monitor codes and take action when breaches of codes occur. These actions are often supported by law (Bayles,

1981; Rich, 1984; Sockett, 1990). Sometimes, codes are enforced by the employer. For example, in the USA, education profession codes of ethics are enforced by school boards or administrative officials (Rich, 1984). The enforcing body, whether it be the professional association or the employer, has the power to exact penalties for code violations: these include laying blame, ostracism, boycotting, exclusion from the professional association, suing for malpractice, and suspending or revoking a licence to practice (Bayles, 1981; Rich, 1984).

While some argue that, for codes to be effective, they need to be enforced and that violations should attract penalties (Bowie, 1982 cited in Coady, 1991; Sockett, 1990), others believe that sanctions do not necessarily ensure adherence to codes. Bayles (1981) and Coady (1991) cite a number of reasons for professions not imposing, or not proceeding to impose, penalties when they have the power to do so. Often the sanctioning body is not advised of breaches of the code; there is the issue of professional interest versus public interest to consider; and the vague language often used in codes leaves complaints open to interpretation. Bayles (1981) also notes that imposed sanctions are often perceived by the public as being lenient. Coady (1991) adds that some would argue that to have a code without sanctions is just a form of window-dressing, a token reassurance for the public.

Of more serious concern is the fear that legislation or 'pseudo-legislation of a precisely defined code of ethics backed by sanctions' (Coady, 1991:19) may result in professionals 'being more anxious to obey the letter of the regulation than to give altruistic service' (1991:19) and so put at risk a virtue of professionals highly valued by clients. Whether or not codes are enforced and sanctions attached to them, there is general agreement that public statements of agreed best practice establish standards and, that when codes are publicised and discussed, these standards are likely to be better defined and maintained. The very existence of codes helps maintain standards so that some level of protection is offered to both professionals and clients.

The National Working Party responsible for developing the AECA Code of Ethics rejected the notion of formal enforcement, as it applies in the traditional professions, in favour of voluntary adherence. Barbara Piscitelli, a member of the National Working Party, reasoned:

> *To use the power of an external authority to impose standards of conduct on people seems to me to be the opposite of what we had originally intended. Thus, I would prefer to see the Code become a well known and publicised statement which would guide the conduct of practitioners, policy-makers and others within the field of early childhood. As such, I feel the existence of the Code will assist people in seeing a unified purpose to their work and in making clearer decisions about difficult issues.* (Piscitelli, 1990 cited in Stonehouse & Creaser, 1991:10.)

The study

As part of a larger project begun three years after the adoption of the Code, the researcher sought practitioners' views about formal enforcement of a code of ethics for early childhood personnel. It was considered important that practitioners should be given the opportunity to express their beliefs, given that the Code is primarily directed towards them as personnel in daily contact with children and families. In their work, practitioners are more likely to encounter ethical issues and be confronted by ethical dilemmas than are personnel who work either on behalf of children or indirectly with children and families. As a consequence, it is practitioners who are more likely to be at risk of breaching the Code and who are more likely to face penalties for code violation.

METHOD

The sample

The views of practitioners were surveyed by means of a postal questionnaire. Questionnaires were sent to Directors of 200 early childhood services located in three coastal regional areas

of New South Wales. Services included preschools, long day care centres, multi-purpose centres, occasional care centres and mobile vans. The majority of services were community-based; some were privately owned; a few were managed by either a council or KU Children's Services. Three questionnaires were sent to each service. Practitioners were invited to make more copies for interested staff including casual staff, cooks and clerical assistants, and to return completed questionnaires anonymously in reply-paid envelopes provided. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

The survey

The questionnaire gathered background information about the practitioners' type and location of service, type of employment, job description, qualifications and experience. It sought their perceptions about the adoption and impact of a code of ethics for early childhood personnel. It also explored practitioners' knowledge of and beliefs about the AECA Code of Ethics. One question focussed specifically on practitioners' beliefs about enforcement of a code of ethics and about a range of possibilities for sanctions. It sought an ordinal scaled response to each statement in a list of statements, each with a four-category response ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

The first set of statements was concerned with the notions of commitment, compulsion and punishment:

- We should all work by a uniform code of ethics.
- We should adhere to a uniform code voluntarily.
- Adherence to a uniform code should be compulsory.
- If we break our code some action should be taken against us.

The next set of statements sought a nomination of the group which should be responsible for action when breaches of a code occur:

- Action for code violation should be taken by our professional association.
- Our employer should be responsible for taking action.

The third set of statements concerned the treatment of the individual responsible for a code violation:

- Severity of code violation should influence the type of action taken.
- The type of action should depend on the circumstances of each situation.

The last set of statements was designed to elicit beliefs about the types of actions which could be taken when violations of the code occurred. These types of actions ranged from supportive practices to severe and public punishments. The first four statements related to individual breaches of a code, whereas the last two related to services and the occupation in general:

- A type of appropriate action is counselling.
- Suspension is an appropriate type of action.
- An appropriate type of action is a reprimand.
- Dismissal is an appropriate type of action.
- An appropriate type of action is withdrawal of service licence.
- A uniform code should be supported by law.

Practitioner responses were analysed using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Responses were received from 225 practitioners in 109 services. Only responses to the question about enforcement and a range of possibilities for sanctions are presented in this section of the paper. Responses to other questions have been reported elsewhere (Pollnitz, 1993; Pollnitz, 1994). All findings presented in tables are expressed as percentages.

In response to the first set of statements concerning notions of commitment, compulsion and punishment, a majority (82.0%) of practitioners either agreed or strongly agreed that there should be a uniform code of ethics for all early childhood personnel. More than half of the respondents (63.7%) either agreed or strongly agreed that adherence to a code should be voluntary, and 47.8% either agreed or strongly agreed that adherence to a code should be compulsory. The data were further analysed to ascertain the level of agreement of respondents about voluntary and compulsory adherence based on their qualification and years of experience. The findings are presented in the following tables.

TABLE 1

VOLUNTARY AND COMPULSORY ADHERENCE TO A CODE IN RELATION TO PRACTITIONERS' QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications	Number of Respondents	Agree/Str Agree Voluntary Adherence	Agree/Str Agree Compulsory Adherence
No qualification	27	77.8	29.6
Other qualification	32	62.5	40.6
Mothercraft Nurse	4	50.0	25.0
CCCS	29	55.2	31.0
CCC	15	73.3	53.3
Assoc. Diploma	8	62.5	50.0
Dip. Teach (EC)	71	54.9	64.8
BEd (EC)	17	70.6	41.2

Though 50% or more of the practitioners in each qualification-based category either agreed or strongly agreed with voluntary adherence to a code, practitioners with no early childhood qualifications, those with Child Care Certificates and Bachelors of Education (Early Childhood) rated voluntary adherence more highly than practitioners with other qualifications, Mothercraft Nurses, and practitioners with Certificates in Child Care Studies, Associate Diplomas, and Diplomas in Teaching (Early Childhood). In six out of eight qualification categories, 50% or less practitioners either agreed or strongly agreed with compulsory adherence to a code. Practitioners with Diplomas in Teaching (Early Childhood) rated compulsory adherence more highly than all other groups. Practitioners with no qualifications were least in favour of compulsory adherence. No consistent pattern of support for either voluntary or compulsory adherence to a code, based on practitioner qualifications, emerged from these results.

TABLE 2

VOLUNTARY AND COMPULSORY ADHERENCE TO A CODE IN RELATION TO PRACTITIONERS' YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Number of Respondents	Agree/Str Agree Voluntary Adherence	Agree/Str Agree Compulsory Adherence
< 1 yr	12	66.7	16.7
1–5 yrs	71	62.0	40.9
6–10 yrs	70	60.0	52.9
11 + yrs	53	64.2	52.8

For each category, based on years of experience, support for voluntary adherence to a code varied within a range of 6–7%, and in all categories 60% or more practitioners favoured voluntary adherence regardless of their years of experience. There was a 36.1% variation of support for compulsory adherence ranging from 16.7% of practitioners with less than one year of experience to 52.9% of practitioners with between six and ten years of experience who all either agreed or strongly agreed with compulsory adherence. Support for compulsory adherence increased with practitioners' years of experience.

In response to the set of statements which sought nomination of the group to be responsible for action when breaches of a code occur, 59.0% of practitioners either agreed or strongly agreed that a professional association should be responsible, and 70.5% either agreed or strongly agreed that an employer should be responsible. The data were further analysed to ascertain the level of agreement of respondents, based on their qualification and years of experience, about which body should enforce a code. The findings are presented in the following tables.

TABLE 3

PRACTITIONERS' PREFERRED CODE ENFORCEMENT BODY IN RELATION TO THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications	Number of Respondents	Agree/Str Agree Professional Assoc	Agree/Str Agree Employer
No qualification	27	48.1	66.7
Other qualification	32	37.5	78.1
Mothercraft Nurse	4	100.0	75.0
CCCS	29	58.6	62.1
CCC	15	60.0	86.7
Assoc. Diploma	8	37.5	75.0
Dip. Teach (EC)	71	67.6	67.6
BEd (EC)	17	58.8	52.9

Practitioners with Associate Diplomas and other qualifications least favoured enforcement by a professional association; Mothercraft Nurses unanimously favoured enforcement by a professional association. Practitioners with Child Care Certificates most favoured, while those with a Bachelor of Education least favoured, enforcement of a code by the employing body. No consistent pattern emerged from these results matching practitioner qualification with support for employer enforcement or professional association enforcement of a code.

TABLE 4

PRACTITIONERS' PREFERRED CODE ENFORCEMENT BODY IN RELATION TO THEIR YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Number of Respondents	Agree/Str Agree Professional Assoc.	Agree/Str Agree Employer
< 1 yr	12	41.7	58.3
1–5 yrs	71	52.1	62.0
6–10 yrs	70	58.6	74.3
11 + yrs	53	66.0	71.7

Support for enforcement of a code by a professional association increased with practitioners' years of experience. Support for enforcement of a code by the employing body also increased with practitioners' years of experience, with the exception of those practitioners who had worked in services for 11 years or more.

In response to the third set of statements concerned with treatment of an individual responsible for a code violation, practitioners strongly supported the statement that the type of action taken should be related to the severity of the breach (86.1%), and even more strongly supported the notion that action for code violation should be individualised. In response to the statement about the type of action appropriate for unethical behaviour, 97.1% of practitioners either agreed or strongly agreed that the type of action taken should depend on the circumstances. Several respondents reinforced this notion by bracketing all the statements about types of possible action and adding a note that their choice of action would depend on the specific situation.

Finally, responses were analysed to the set of statements designed to elicit beliefs about the appropriateness of actions of varying severity (ranging, for individuals, from counselling to dismissal, and for services, including withdrawal of licence). The findings are presented in the following table that scales numbers of types of action in increasing magnitude.

TABLE 5

NUMBER OF APPROPRIATE TYPES OF ACTION FOR CODE VIOLATION

Number of Actions	Agree/Str Agree
None	2.5
One	14.3
Two	31.5
Three	14.3
Four	17.2
Five	20.2

Only 2.5% of practitioners either agreed or strongly agreed that none of the actions was appropriate. This low percentage is consistent with the finding that a majority of practitioners believe some action should be taken against those who violate a code of ethics. It is also apparent that, as the number of suggested types of action increases, there is a tendency for a corresponding increase in percentage level of practitioner agreement. The tendency is not consistent, however; for example, the percentage of practitioners who agreed or strongly agreed that two types of action were appropriate is considerably higher than the level of agreement about five types of action. In order to explain this variation, the data were further analysed to determine the percentage of practitioners who either agreed or strongly agreed with the appropriateness of each type of action in the suggested range.

The findings are presented in the following table that lists types of actions in increasing severity.

TABLE 6

APPROPRIATENESS OF TYPE OF ACTION FOR CODE VIOLATION

Type of Action	Agree	Str Agree	Total
Counselling	73.0	19.5	92.5
Reprimand	82.1	2.1	84.2
Suspension	45.3	1.6	46.9
Dismissal	42.7	1.1	43.8
Licence withdrawal	33.9	2.6	36.5

As the severity of the type of action increased from helping practices to punishments, it was found that increasing numbers of practitioners did not respond to individual statements, though the response rate was still high. Of the 206 practitioners, six did not respond to the statement about counselling, eleven did not respond to the statement about reprimand, 14 did not respond to the statement about suspension, 21 did not respond to the statement about dismissal, and 17 did not respond to the statement about licence withdrawal.

Table 6 indicates that, as the severity of action increases, the level of practitioner agreement decreases. Counselling, a helping practice, is practitioners' most approved choice of action with the least strong punishment, reprimand, rated next. This finding accounts for the variation identified in practitioners' response to the numbers of appropriate action for code violation. There is a 3.7% drop in agreement about these two types of action to agreement about the stronger punishments of suspension and dismissal. Dismissal is the least approved type of individual action and withdrawal of service licence the least approved type of action.

DISCUSSION

To further discussion data obtained from practitioner responses to other parts of the questionnaire are included in this section.

In response to an open-ended question, practitioners gave examples of ethical issues or dilemmas they had encountered in their work relationships. Two areas of significant concern emerged from the range of examples given by practitioners: firstly, practitioners' concern about being requested to treat children in either harmful or inappropriate ways; and, secondly, their concern about colleagues' work practices. In addition, analysis of the examples they provided indicated that ethical issues arose more frequently between staff and parents/primary family caregiver, and between staff and staff, than between people in other relationships, for example, staff-management/employer, staff-children, and staff-community. Practitioners' experience and expressed level of concern may account for the strong support they gave for adherence to a uniform code of ethics for early childhood personnel. Their majority support for adherence to a uniform code of ethics indicates a high level of commitment to the provision of quality service programs for children and families, and is evidence of acceptance of their obligation to ensure the well-being of the children with whom they work. Practitioners' support for adherence to a uniform code of ethics should also be perceived as an expression of their professionalism.

Though more than half of the practitioners rejected compulsory adherence to a code, over half, too, supported the taking of some action against those who breach a code of ethics. It is clear from this finding that practitioners do not reject compulsory adherence on the pretext that voluntary adherence will allow them to 'get away' with unethical behaviour, but that they regard unethical behaviour as a serious matter which should be dealt with appropriately. Despite this view, however, and despite their support for action being commensurate with the gravity and circumstances of code violation, practitioners' much preferred choices of types of

action are limited to the helping practice of counselling and the least punitive measure of reprimand. There is markedly less support for the more punitive actions of suspension and dismissal for individuals, and least support for withdrawal of service licence.

Practitioners' preference for voluntary adherence to a code reflects Piscitelli's (1990 cited in Stonehouse & Creaser, 1991) and the National Working Party's position on the issue of enforcement of a code for early childhood personnel. Piscitelli's (1990:10) statement has been quoted in part previously but it is appropriate to quote it here in full, as it not only puts the position for voluntary adherence but also points to the problems inherent in adopting a policy of compulsion.

> *On the matter of implementation of the Code of Ethics, I feel our Code is best described as a guideline to moral conduct within the field. I do not feel that AECA or any other group has the power to bind individuals to such conduct. I feel that AECA can provide the people who work within our field with some clear indicators of their moral duty towards children; this is the purpose of the Code. I would not want to see an enforcement policy in place for the moral conduct of early childhood professionals. To use the power of an external authority to impose standards of conduct on people seems to me to be the opposite of what we had originally intended. Thus, I would prefer to see the Code become a well known and publicised statement which would guide the conduct of practitioners, policy makers and others within the field of early childhood. As such, I feel the existence of the Code will assist people in seeing a unified purpose to their work and in making clearer decisions about difficult issues.*

The difficulty for the AECA acting as an enforcement body for a code of ethics is its status in the field. Though the AECA is recognised as 'a strong national association with membership open to all those who embrace its objectives' (Stonehouse, 1994:119), unlike other professional organisations, it has no licensing powers and its decisions are not supported by law. Since there are no other organisations of early childhood professionals that are active in all states and territories, and that have registration and licensing power, enforcement of the AECA Code by an appropriate professional association is problematic.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that services are already taking the initiative in relation to enforcement of the AECA Code of Ethics. A few practitioners reported that their services had adopted the Code as policy. In one instance, the management committee had ratified the adoption of the Code as policy. In other services, staff members signed an agreement to abide by the Code. There is a service where staff renewed their written agreement at the beginning of each year. In these services, adherence to the Code has become part of the work contract entered into by staff as individuals and staff as groups, with their employer. Though this trend does not appear to be widespread at present, it reflects the preference of practitioners for enforcement to be the responsibility of the employer. While it may be the case that practitioners perceive that, in principle, the employer is the most appropriate body to enforce adherence to a code of ethics, their preferred option may be due, in part, to a recognition that no definitive professional organisation is currently in a position to monitor professional practice.

Regardless of its adopted position on enforcement, the AECA needs to respond to the feedback of those most affected by the Code — the practitioners. It needs to raise practitioners' awareness of the complexities and controversial issues (Stonehouse, 1991) involved in the AECA establishing itself as a professional association in the traditional sense. As a potential enforcement organisation, it needs to propose how it would monitor individual and service adherence to the Code. In addition, the AECA needs to raise practitioners' awareness of the implications for them of individual employing bodies being responsible for enforcement of the Code. These issues need to be debated in and by the field, including employers and unions, so that practitioners and all other early childhood personnel can clarify their thinking and reach shared understandings about what is best for children, families and early childhood professionals.

Also of value is ongoing discussion about whether the principle of voluntary adherence to the Code should be retained and what the implications of voluntary adherence are for individuals and services. The early childhood field prides itself on its inclusivity. Proof of this approach by its practitioners is the finding in this study that, regardless of qualification, the majority of practitioners are committed to adhering to a uniform code of ethics. This cohesiveness of opinion across all levels of qualification suggests that voluntary adherence to the Code, accompanied by guidelines which describe administrative procedures and support strategies to be implemented in services when breaches of the Code occur, may be a viable way forward. It may be argued, too, that retaining voluntary adherence to the Code allows for flexibility in choosing an appropriate course of action, not only when dealing with breaches of the Code but when implementing its ideals. Finally, whatever the disadvantages of retaining the existing voluntary Code, proponents of an enforceable code will need to convince early childhood professionals that such a code would do more than police those rare examples of totally unacceptable practice which are, in the majority of cases, already subject to current legislation.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study confirm that the majority of practitioners, regardless of their situation, qualification, position of responsibility or experience, perceive ethical issues as worth struggling with intellectually, and are committed to adherence to a uniform code of ethics for early childhood personnel. Though opinion is divided about whether adherence should be voluntary or compulsory, and about what body should be responsible for monitoring adherence to a code, there is a detectable tendency for those practitioners with more years of experience to record positive responses to the notion of compulsory adherence and enforcement by a professional body. Despite their strong support for action take for code violation being dependent upon the circumstances of the situation, practitioners' preference for appropriate action is limited to counselling and reprimand. The findings of this study support the development of the AECA Code of Ethics and provide a basis for further consideration and debate by the AECA and early childhood field so that strategies for effective implementation of the Code can be devised.

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AUTHOR

Lois Pollnitz, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, The University of Newcastle, NSW 2308. Specialisations: Field experience in early childhood teacher education, early childhood curriculum, professional ethics in early childhood.

CREATIVITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN THE FAMILY CONTEXT?

Lee Tennent and Donna Berthelsen
Centre for Applied Early Childhood Studies
Queensland University of Technology

ABSTRACT

This two-part study examined aspects of family environments which are considered to be influential in the development of young children's creativity. One hundred and twenty-three mothers of children aged 4–6 years were surveyed on their valuing of particular personality characteristics (The Ideal Child Checklist) and specific features of the home environment (The Creative Environment Scale). The majority of mothers were found to be providing environments which are considered nurturant of creativity, and valued personality characteristics considered important to creativity. A subsample of mothers who participated in the first phase of the study responded to a second questionnaire to identify their parenting style. Parenting style was categorised from the responses to two scales measuring maturity demands and parental control strategies. These measures were developed by Greenberger (1988). Authoritarian mothers were less likely to provide a home environment that nurtured creativity. The results are discussed in terms of the two positions of parenting that emerged from the analyses. Similar positions, traditional versus modern parenting, have been identified in previous research by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985). These aspects of parenting are discussed in relation to the features of family environments which support creativity and the personality characteristics which parents value.

INTRODUCTION

While much research has been conducted to enhance our understanding of creativity, few studies have focused on young children. Of those studies which have been conducted, little attention has been paid to the relationship between young children's creativity and their family environments. This lack of research is both surprising and disappointing since the powerful influence of the family on children's development has long been recognised (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Laosa and Sigel (1982) maintained that, in relation to children's learning and development, the family was not only the first, but also the most significant influence. This influence is thought to be exercised by parents directly through their interactions with children and, indirectly, via the manner in which they organise and arrange the family life and provide activities within the home (Power & Parke, 1982).

Definitions of creativity tend to process-oriented (creativity is considered to be a particular style of acting or thinking), product-oriented (creativity is seem to result in identifiable and tangible outcomes), or both process- and product-oriented. The following definition which reflects both a process and product orientation describes creativity as

> *the process of sensing problems, forming ideas, and driving unprecedented solutions of unique problems with elaboration and embellishment* (Torrance, 1963, cited in Kulp & Tarter, 1986:154).

Creativity and family contexts

Wright and Fesler (1987) considered that the difference between the promise and fulfilment of children's creative potential lies in particular features of early home environments. Aspects of this environment which have been identified as being causally related to creative development were the values and attitudes of parents (Raina, Kumar & Raina, 1980), and their child-rearing practices (Lett, 1976).

Torrance (1965) believed that, if children were to develop their creative potential, parents must value those personality characteristics which are associated with creative individuals. He proposed that characteristics such as stubbornness, independent thinking, risk-taking, non-conformity and sensitivity were descriptive of creative individuals. It is understandable that these characteristics may be considered undesirable and may even be discouraged by many parents, however, Torrance (1965), Raina et al. (1980) and Singh (1987) believed that acceptance and encouragement of such characteristics were crucial for creativity to flourish.

Findings generated by parental responses to the Ideal Child Checklist (developed in 1965 by Torrance) are reasonably consistent, revealing that parents often ignore or discourage their children's creative behaviours. Studies by Raina (1975), Raina et al. (1980) and Singh (1987) revealed that parents invariably favoured those characteristics which reflected conformity. Singh (1987), for example, found that mothers valued obedient, socially well-adjusted, and conforming characteristics, while they least valued characteristics such as a willingness to take risks, asking questions, and independence of judgement. Similarly, findings by Kohn (1977) and Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) indicated that, regardless of culture of socio-economic status, parents valued more highly those qualities in children which reflected conformity more than self-directed behaviour in children.

Early studies which examined the influence of family environments on children's creativity revealed a relationship between creativity and parenting style. Cropley (1967) emphasised that high levels of creativity were associated with specific child-rearing practices. Parents of creative children were found to encourage personal autonomy and independence. They were less concerned with right or conventional behaviours. Walberg, Rasher and Parkerson (1979) acknowledged that parental interactional styles play a key role in facilitating creativity, and they also emphasised that parents need to demonstrate high levels of creativity in order that children were constantly exposed to creative models.

Wright (1987) surmised from a review of previous literature that environments which nurtured creativity were characterised by non-authoritarian control, non-possessive parent-child relationships and a climate where adults modelled creative thinking. Wright noted that through non-authoritarian, democratic discipline children were encouraged to be independent and make their own decisions. Through a caring, supportive and non-possessive relationship with their parents, children were likely to develop high self-esteem. Wright proposed that there were three facets of creative home environments. These were the encouragement of independence, demonstration of respect for the child and the provision of a stimulating environment.

From interaction in a home environment where parents value play, exploration and curiosity, children develop skills necessary for, and positive attitudes toward, creative thinking. Such environments may well reflect authoritative parenting as proposed by Baumrind (1967). Through observational studies, Baumrind developed a typology of parenting styles which differentiated style according to the relative degrees of warmth and control exhibited by parents in their interactions with children. She identified that children who had authoritative parents (high in warmth and control) were more likely to have higher self-esteem and be more socially and cognitively competent. The children of authoritarian parents (low in warmth and high in control) were lower in self-esteem and less competent socially and cognitively.

Scope of the study

Creativity is viewed as a broad construct which encompasses concepts of cognitive processes and personality factors. The focus of the study is on the attributes which are considered

supportive of the development of creativity and the parental practices that are considered to nurture it, rather than the direct measurement of creativity per se.

Although it is recognised that fathers are important in the development of young children, the respondents in this study were mothers, since mothers continue to carry the substantial responsibility for the care of young children. The manner in which mothers may support creativity by way of their values and practices provided the framework of this research.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this research was to identify particular features of Australian family contexts in the 1990s which are likely to nurture creativity in young children. The relationships between the personality characteristics of children which parents most value, features of the home environment which are considered to nurture creativity, and mothers' parenting styles were examined. The study was conducted in two phases.

In Phase One, parental ideas about ideal personality characteristics in children were examined, as well as parental ideas about the importance of certain home experiences. Specific research questions from this phase were:

1. What are the personality characteristics of children that mothers most value, and are these personality characteristics associated with creativity?

2. What are the features of family environments which mothers consider important and are these features considered to nurture creativity?

3. What are the relationships between the personality characteristics that mothers value and the features of family environments they provide?

The measurement in Phase One constituted the basis for Phase Two. Phase Two was concerned with the relationship between the constructs identified in the first phase of the research and parenting style. In this phase, a subsample of the respondents in the first stage participated. The specific research questions were:

1. What is the relationship between maternal parenting style and the personality characteristics that mothers most value?

2. What is the relationship between maternal parenting style and the features of family environments that mothers provide?

Overview of methodology

The research employed a survey design. Each phase of the study involved the completion of a questionnaire by mothers who had responded to an invitation to participate in a research study concerned with families and young children's developmental experiences. Questionnaires in the first phase were distributed to a number of kindergartens, preschools and year one programs in the inner suburbs of Brisbane and these were then distributed by the teachers to the parents. Each questionnaire was supplied with a replied-paid envelope. Of the 300 questionnaires originally distributed, 123 were returned, representing a return rate of 41%. From this first phase, 83 respondents agreed to further involvement by supplying a contact name and address. In Phase Two, 71 respondents returned questionnaires, representing a return rate of 85%.

The subject group for Phase One were primarily Anglo-Australian (80%). Ninety-one percent were married or living with a partner. Seventy-seven percent had post-secondary education or training, and 56% were currently employed. There were no significant differences (using t-tests or Chi-square) between the respondents in the first and second phases by the demographic characteristics of age, ethnicity, marital status, education or employment status.

PHASE ONE

Subjects

Respondents were 123 mothers of children aged 4 to 7 years. The mothers had a mean age of 35.9 years (SD = 4.44), while the mean age of the focus children was 66.97 months (SD = 10.49). The children's ages ranged from 46 to 99 months of age.

Measures

Two measures for ascertaining parents' orientation to nurturing creativity and valuing of particular characteristics in children were used. *The Ideal Child Checklist* was derived from MacKinnon (1962), Paguio and Hollett (1991), Paolini (1990) and Torrance (1965). Respondents were required to rate 24 personality characteristics on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (unimportant) to 7 (highly important). The measure assumed two subscales — characteristics assumed to nurture creativity (e.g., curious) and characteristics assumed to inhibit creativity (e.g., sensible). *The Creative Environment Scale* was derived from Wright (1987). Respondents rated 18 items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always), indicating the frequency with which they encouraged specific behaviours in the focus child, or which they practised themselves. This scale assumed three subscales — the encouragement of independence, demonstration of respect for the child and the provision of a stimulating environment.

Analysis and findings

Personality characteristics valued by parents

Responses to the Ideal Child Checklist were factor analysed by principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation. Variables with loadings greater than .40 were included for the interpretation of a factor. The measure was assumed to have two subscales — characteristics considered conducive to creativity and characteristics considered detrimental to creativity. However, the initial principal component analysis revealed that a two factor solution did not provide the best fit for the data. A three-factor solution with orthogonal rotation afforded the most simple and interpretable structure accounting for 45.9% of the variance. The first factor, *The Inquiring Child*, accounted for 22.5% of the variance and contained 12 items. The second factor, *The Reliable Child*, accounted for 15.7% of the variance and contained 7 items. The third factor, *The Compliant Child*, accounted for 7.8% of the variance and contained 4 items. It would appear that Factor 1 reflected those items conducive to creativity, while Factors 2 and 3 were coherent subsets of the items considered detrimental to creativity. One item, self-reliant, had complex loadings across Factors 1 and 2 and was excluded from further analyses. Details of the items and the factor loadings are presented in Table 1.

Alpha coefficients revealed adequate internal reliability for the factor scores with an alpha level of .83 for Factor 1, The Inquiring Child; .80 for Factor 2, The Reliable Child; and .70 for Factor 3, The Compliant Child.

The group of characteristics labelled The Inquiring Child clearly comprised those characteristics which are considered to be conducive to creativity (such as curious, independent in thinking, and imaginative). On the other hand, the second and third groups of characteristics, labelled The Reliable Child and The Compliant Child, comprised those characteristics which are considered detrimental to creativity (such as polite, tidy, well behaved, compliant, eager to please, and quiet). Those dimensions seem to reflect a difference in the strength of conviction about how children should conform to behavioural standards.

Insight into how parents prioritise the three groups of personality characteristics was gained by calculating the mean item score for each factor. The inquiring and reliable characteristics were rated highly with a mean item score for inquiring of 5.93 (SD = .53), and for reliable as 5.82 (SD = .62), while the compliant characteristics rated least highly with a mean item score

of 3.99 (SD = 1.00). This indicated that parents valued characteristics considered conducive to creativity but also characteristics which gave them a sense of being able to rely on their child.

Creative family environments

Responses to The Creative Environment Scale were factor analysed using principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation. Variables with loadings greater than .40 were included for the interpretation of a factor. A two factor structure solution accounted for 35.9% of the variance. One item, show affection, failed to reach the cut-off of .40 for inclusion in the interpretation of a factor and was excluded from further analysis. The first factor labelled *The Democratic Environment* accounted for 23.9% of the variance and included 11 items. The second factor labelled *The Restrictive Environment* accounted for 12.1% of the variance and included six items. Details of the factor loadings are presented in Table 2. Alpha coefficients revealed satisfactory internal reliability of .74 for the first factor and only moderate reliability at .58 for the second factor.

Analysis of The Creative Environment Scale did not support Wright's (1987) model of creative family environments. Wright had considered that three groups of family practices (encourage of independence, demonstration of respect, and provision of a stimulating environment) were responsible for nurturing creativity in the home. However, analysis of the responses designed to elicit information about these practices, revealed two distinct groups of practices. Both groups comprised a mix of items related to the encourage of independence, the demonstration of respect, and the provision of a stimulating environment. They reflected two types of practices — those which could be considered democratic and those which could be considered restrictive. This dichotomous position about parenting attitudes appears to mirror 'traditional' versus 'modern' parenting practices as proposed by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985).

Mothers in this study were more democratic than restrictive in the types of environments that they provided for their children. This was apparent from the higher mean item score on the democratic factor, 5.53 (SD = .65) compared to the mean item factor score, 2.90 (SD = .85) for the restrictive dimension.

TABLE 1

FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE IDEAL CHILD CHECKLIST FOR A PRINCIPAL COMPONENT FACTOR ANALYSIS USING AN ORTHOGONAL ROTATION

	F1	F2	F3	h^2
The Inquiring Child				
Curious	**.73**	.02	.13	.56
Adventurous	**.68**	.01	.28	.55
Independent in thinking	**.67**	.19	.34	.61
Imaginative	**.65**	.15	.22	.50
Sensitive	**.61**	.04	.13	.39
Unwilling to accept things	**.60**	.04	.04	.36
Asking questions	**.55**	.11	.21	.36
Risk taking	**.54**	.06	.05	.30
Persistent	**.54**	.25	.34	.47
Resourceful	**.50**	.23	.37	.56
Intuitive	**.47**	.20	.03	.27
Engrossed in tasks	**.42**	.00	.34	.30
The Reliable Child				
Polite	.00	**.72**	.18	.55
Well behaved	.14	**.72**	.20	.57
Tidy	.12	**.69**	.20	.54
Sensible	.10	**.69**	.04	.48
Cooperative	.21	**.65**	.05	.47
Completes tasks	.26	**.61**	.24	.51
Sociable	.19	**.48**	.13	.28
The Compliant Child				
Compliant	.02	.24	**.72**	.57
Eager to please	.21	.32	**.67**	.59
Quiet	.05	.04	**.62**	.39
Conforming	.01	.16	**.59**	.38
% of variance	22.5%	15.9%	7.8%	

TABLE 2

FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT MEASURE FOR A PRINCIPAL COMPONENT FACTOR ANALYSIS USING AN ORTHOGONAL ROTATION

	F1	F2	h^2
The Democratic Environment			
Encourage breadth of interests	**.75**	.05	.56
Encourage acceptance of mistakes	**.67**	.07	.45
Involve child in family decisions	**.63**	.05	.40
Encourage positive and negative feelings	**.61**	.01	.37
Encourage questioning of opinions	**.61**	.28	.45
Discuss different moral and ethical views	**.60**	.10	.37
Encourage child's own interests	**.52**	.11	.29
Encourage child's imaginative play	**.52**	.30	.37
Encourage self-reliance	**.52**	.09	.28
Discuss issues of conflict	**.47**	.28	.30
Explain reasoning behind family rules	**.42**	.33	.29
The Restrictive Environment			
Discourage sexually inappropriate activities	.01	**.65**	.42
Concerned about growing independence	.25	**.62**	.45
Smack child as a means of discipline	.02	**.61**	.37
Encourage child not to make mistakes	.10	**.52**	.28
Demonstrate non-stereotyped parenting roles	.39	**.47**	.38
Keep child's creative products	.17	**.42**	.20
% of variance	23.9%	12.1%	

Relationship between dimensions of the ideal child checklist and the creative environment scale

Intercorrelations between the dimensions on these measures are presented in Table 3. There were a number of significant correlations among the dimensions of maternal behaviour. The dimensions, The Inquiring Child, and the provision of a democratic environment were significantly correlated, ($r = .42$, $p < .01$), and The Inquiring Child was also correlated with the dimension, The Reliable Child, ($r = .24$, $p < .01$), indicating some overlap in their measurement on The Ideal Child Checklist. The dimension, The Reliable Child was also correlated with the dimension, The Compliant Child, ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), indicating again some overlap in the dimensions on The Ideal Child Checklist. It would seem that the dimensions of The Inquiring Child, The Reliable Child and The Compliant Child provide a continuum for preferences for ideal characteristics in children from inquiring through reliable to compliant. The dimension, The Compliant Child, was also significantly correlated with the provision of a restrictive environment, ($r = .44$, $p < .01$), and negatively correlated with the provision of a democratic environment, ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$).

PHASE TWO

Subjects

Seventy-one respondents, who had participated in the first phase of the study and who had agreed to further contact, responded to a follow-up questionnaire. The mothers had a mean age of 35.5 years (SD = 4.15), while the mean age of the focus children was 66.0 months.

Measures

Maturity demands

Maternal demands for mature behaviour was measured on a scale developed by Greenberger (1988). Mothers were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always) the frequency with which they expected their child to meet certain behavioural expectations. Of the 28 questions, 9 measured demands for independence, 8 measured prosocial demands, and 11 measured demands for self-control. Examples of items in each of these domains is presented in Table 3. Mean scores generated in this study were very similar to those obtained by Greenberger and Goldberg (1989).

TABLE 3

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS USED TO MEASURE THE DIMENSIONS OF MATURITY DEMANDS (INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR, PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SELF-CONTROL)

Independent behaviour
How often do you expect your child to make his/her own friends among children the same age?
Prosocial behaviour
How often do you expect your child to lend and share possessions willingly?
Self-control
How often do you expect your child to sit or play quietly (or not interrupt) while adults are having a conversation?

Parent control

A measure of the strategies employed by mothers to control their children's behaviours, as developed by Greenberger (1988), was used. This measure, based upon the concepts and findings of Baumrind (1971, 1983), was intended to operationalise elements of disciplinary style and responsiveness. It included child-rearing goals (such as the importance of developing respect for authority, learning to think for oneself) and manner of dealing with children's anger and curiosity. Mothers were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how strongly they 1 (agreed) to 7 (disagreed) with each of 39 statements concerned with raising children aged 4 to 6 years. The scoring of responses gave scores for the dimensions of harsh control, firm/responsive control, and lax control. Typical items measuring these dimensions are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS USED TO MEASURE THE DIMENSIONS OF PARENT CONTROL (HARSH, FIRM/RESPONSIVE AND LAX CONTROL

Harsh control
When I make a rule, I just *make* it: I don't go into explanations.
Firm/Responsive control
The most important thing I am teaching my child is to think for himself/herself.
Lax control
I let my child decide when to go to bed, or wait for him/her to fall asleep.

Parenting Style

A categorisation of parenting style is made possible by cross-classifying the mothers' scores on the Maturity Demands and Parental Control measured using the median scores for the sample group, for the subscales on these measures. Detailed information for the categorisation of parenting style is provided by Greenberger (1988). Mothers were identified as either Permissive, Permissive/Authoritative, Authoritative, Authoritative/Authoritarian, or Authoritarian. The categorisation according to parenting style for the sample group is presented in Table 5. As only two mothers were classified as being Authoritarian/ Authoritative, this group was excluded from further analysis.

TABLE 5

CLASSIFICATION OF MOTHERS ACCORDING TO PARENTING STYLE

Style	Frequency	%
Permissive	20	28.2
Permissive/Authoritative	18	25.4
Authoritative	10	14.1
Authoritative/Authoritarian	2	2.8
Authoritarian	21	29.6

Analysis and findings

In order to examine the relationships between parenting style, the valuing of certain personality characteristics in children and the provision of family environments which nurture creativity, the two measures developed in the first phase of research were used. Mean scores for the components of these measures The Ideal Child Checklist and The Creative Environment Scale were calculated for the subsample. Using t-tests, there were no significant differences between the factor scores for those who participated in the second phase of the research compared to those who did not participate.

Parenting style and dimensions of the ideal child checklist

Differences in maternal parenting style and scores for the components, The Inquiring Child, The Reliable Child and The Compliant Child from The Ideal Child Checklist, were examined by one-way multivariate analyses of variance with parenting style as the independent variable and the component scores on The Ideal Checklist as the dependent variables. These analyses were used to determine whether there were any significant differences in scores on the factors, according to the style categories. One-way multivariate analysis of variance was used because there were multiple dependent variables and so the analyses were protected against inflated Type 1 errors due to multiple analyses. A significant multivariate effect was followed by univariate analyses and post hoc comparisons between groups using Newman-Kuels Multiple Range Test to interpret where any differences lay between the groups on the parenting style categorisation.

The means and standard deviations on the dependent measures from The Ideal Child Checklist as a function of parenting style are shown in Table 6. With the use of Pillais Criterion, the multivariate effect was significant ($p = .01$). Univariate tests revealed a significant effect for the dependent variable, The Compliant Child, $F\ (3, 65) = 3.43$, $p = .02$. The post hoc comparisons using Newman-Kuels tests indicated that mothers with an authoritarian parenting style had significantly higher scores (at the .05 level) for valuing compliance than mothers with a permissive parenting style.

TABLE 6

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR COMPONENTS OF PARENTING STYLE (PERMISSIVE, MIXED PERMISSIVE/AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITARIAN) AND COMPONENTS OF THE IDEAL CHILD CHECKLIST (INQUIRING, RELIABLE, COMPLIANT)

		Inquiring	Reliable	Compliant
Permissive	Mean	79.25	40.25	14.25
	SD	6.38	3.88	4.04
Permiss/Authoritat	Mean	77.28	40.50	15.33
	SD	5.52	4.18	3.74
Authoritative	Mean	80.70	40.40	15.90
	SD	5.40	4.30	3.90
Authoritarian	Mean	75.19	42.52	17.86
	SD	7.21	3.78	3.18

Parenting style and dimensions of the creative environment scale

Differences in maternal style and scores for the dimensions Democratic and Restrictive on The Creative Environment Scale were also examined by one-way multivariate analysis of variance with parenting style as the independent variable and the component scored as the dependent variables. Again, only the categories of permissive, permissive/authoritative, authoritative and authoritarian were used in these analyses because there were only two subjects classified as Authoritarian/Authoritative. This category was not included in the analyses. The means and standard deviations of each dependent measure as a function of parenting style are shown in Table 7.

With the use of Pillais Criterion, the multivariate effect was significant ($p = .02$). Univariate tests revealed a significant effect for the component Restrictive Environment, $F\ (3,62) = 4.09$, $p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons using Newman-Kuels Multiple Range Test indicated that mothers with an authoritarian style had significantly higher scores (at the .05 level) for the

provision of a restrictive environment compared to mothers with a permissive parenting style and also with mothers with a mixed permissive/authoritarian style.

TABLE 7

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE COMPONENTS OF PARENTING STYLE (PERMISSIVE, MIXED PERMISSIVE/AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHORITARIAN) AND COMPONENTS OF THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT SCALE (DEMOCRATIC, RESTRICTIVE)

		Democratic	Restrictive
Permissive	Mean	62.68	14.95
	SD	6.75	3.26
Permiss/Authoritat	Mean	60.65	15.18
	SD	6.45	2.94
Authoritative	Mean	63.44	16.00
	SD	5.45	5.24
Authoritarian	Mean	58.57	18.90
	SD	6.04	4.77

REVIEW OF FINDINGS

What were the personality characteristics of children that mothers most valued? Were these personality characteristics those which are associated with creativity?

Mothers' responses to the questions relating to the valuing of children's personality characteristics identified three groups of characteristics, not two as outlined by Torrance (1965). The three groups reflected characteristics that could be considered 'inquiring' (or 'creative' according to Torrance), 'reliable' and 'compliant' (or 'conforming' according to Torrance). The difference between the two groups of conforming characteristics, it appears, lies in the degree to which those characteristics represent adherence to behavioural restrictions. Mothers generally indicated that they valued inquiring personality characteristics (such as curious, independent in thinking, imaginative and resourceful) over reliable (such as polite, well behaved, tidy and sensible) and compliant (such as compliant, eager to please and quiet) personality characteristics. In other words, they were more predisposed towards creative than conforming personality characteristics. This represents a departure from previous research findings (Raina, 1975; Raina et al., 1980; Singh, 1987; Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1990; Torrance, 1965). This may be accounted for by changing values and the cultural context. Values may have changed with respect to parenting in the 1990s and also this is the first study in the Australian social context.

What were the dimensions of family environments which are considered to be nurturant of creativity?

Mothers' responses to the questions related to the nature of family environments identified two dimensions and not three dimensions as proposed by Wright (1987). Wright's three dimensions, encouragement of independence, demonstration of respect and a stimulating environment, were not reflected by the dimensions that emerged from this research. What did result were two dimensions that effectively dichotomised particular parenting practices according to whether they were democratic or restrictive. As such, Wright's model was more easily conceptualised in terms of the traditional versus modern parenting constructs proposed by Schaefer and Edgerton (1985). Mothers favoured more democratic environments than restrictive environments. In doing so, they frequently encouraged their children to broaden

their interests, be self-reliant, express positive and negative feelings and be involved in family decision-making. It would be reasonable to suggest, then, that these practices are more reflective of modern parenting than traditional parenting.

What were the relationships between the personality characteristics that mothers valued and the types of environments they provided?

Some significant relationships were noted here. Two relationships such as those between the provision of a democratic family environment and preference for an inquiring child, and between provision of a restrictive environment and preference for a compliant child, were predictable. It makes intuitive sense that mothers who value curiosity, independent thinking, asking questions and risk-taking are more likely to provide a democratic home environment than mothers who value compliance, conformity and quietness.

What was the relationship between mothers' parenting style and the personality characteristics that mothers most valued?

It was expected that mothers who were authoritative in their parenting style would value most highly those personality characteristics seen as 'inquiring'. Silverberg, Tennenbaum and Jacob (1992) described authoritative parents as those who encouraged their children's individuality, expression of ideas and contribution to decision-making. However, no significant relationship between authoritative parenting and the inquiring personality characteristics was found. A significant effect was noted between authoritarian parenting and valuing of compliant child characteristics.

What was the relationship between maternal parenting style and the types of environments that mothers provided?

The only significant relationship between parenting style and type of family environment was that authoritarian mothers reported to be more restrictive in their environmental provisions. It is likely that mothers who exercise stringent and uncompromising control over their children place stronger limits on their expression of ideas (Silverberg et al., 1992). They would also discourage sexually inappropriate activities, use harsher discipline techniques and be concerned about their child's growing independence. There was no evidence of a relationship between authoritative parenting and the provision of a democratic environment. This was surprising as it seems likely that mothers who are non-controlling, and encouraging of their child's individuality and freedom of thought, would also provide environments that actively encourage independence, respect and the exploration of ideas. These were the environments reported by MacKinnon (1962), Wright (1987) and Pratt-Summers (1989) which nurtured creativity.

Limitations of the study

Several limitations of the study were apparent. Firstly, a number of the measures used require further development. In order to explore parental beliefs, values and practices, The Ideal Child Checklist and The Creative Environment scale need to be refined. Reliabilities of the scale dimensions were moderate to high. Some concurrent validity was established by the relationships between the dimensions of measures. This study also relied on survey questionnaires to gather data. While questionnaires are considered invaluable for obtaining parental views on a range of issues (Touliatos, Perlmutter & Strauss, 1990), a multi-method approach using interviews and observations would have provided additional insight into the area of investigation. Another limitation concerned the homogeneity of the sample. In terms of ethnic diversity and socio-economic status, the sample used in this study was extremely limited. An overwhelming majority of the mothers was highly educated and, as such, results of the study cannot be generalised to other groups. Further studies need to sample a wider cross-section of the population. Finally, in order to accurately shed light on early environments for creativity, the values, beliefs and practices of fathers must also be accounted for in future research on the nurturing of creativity in families.

Conclusions

Results of the study indicated that most mothers valued the personality characteristics that are associated with creativity and provided environments that are considered to nurture creativity. This is encouraging in light of previous research (Raina, 1975; Raina et al., 1980; Singh, 1987; Torrance, 1965) which had revealed a general preference among parents for conforming characteristics. These new findings may be indicative of a change in maternal attitudes — a change which has resulted in more child-centred family environments.

This study has provided insight into understanding parental perspectives and family practices which may nurture creativity. It is important that we continue to recognise the importance of nurturing children's creative potential thereby maximising their ability to keep pace with the phenomenal changes taking place in the world.

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AUTHORS

Lee Tennent. Currently PhD student, Centre for Applied Studies in Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove 4059. Specialisations: families and child creativity, child development, multimedia in early childhood teacher education.

Donna Berthelsen, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove 4059. Specialisations: Child care and development, social and emotional development of young children, parenting beliefs and practices.

HOW FAMILY-CENTERED ARE EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES: STAFF AND PARENT PERCEPTIONS?

Ian Dempsey and Anne Carruthers
Special Education Centre
University of Newcastle

ABSTRACT

Early intervention staff (N=187) and parents (N=273) with a young child attending an early intervention program were surveyed about their perceptions of the extent to which support, provided or received, was family-centered, and their perceptions of the way in which they would like support to be provided or received. The results indicated differences between current and preferred support for both groups, and differences across groups. The results are discussed in relation to the changing orientation of early intervention services, the level of family-centered support apparent in services, and how well service staff may be meeting the needs of the families they support.

The past decade has seen a dramatic shift in the desired orientation of early intervention services in several Western countries. This shift has involved a movement away from child-centered approaches in assessment and intervention, to a family-centered approach in service delivery. This change in focus has considerable intuitive appeal. However, while it is based on a range of value statements outlined below, and is supported by legislation in the United States, there has been very little research to confirm the assumed efficacy of the family-centered approach.

Family-centered '...refers to a combination of beliefs and practices that define particular ways of working with families that are consumer driven and competency enhancing' (Dunst, Johanson, Trivette & Hamby, 1991:115). Despite the multi-faceted nature of the family-centered approach, there is general agreement as to what constitutes this orientation. In a brief review of the literature, McBride, Brotherson, Joanning, Whiddon and Demmitt (1993) identified three major principles that encompass the family-centered approach. First, the establishment of the family as the focus of service provision (Krauss, 1990). The young child with special needs is recognised as living in a family context, and so it is argued that interventions to support the child are likely to be more effective when framed within that context.

Second, families are supported to play a role in decision-making about the nature of the service that is provided to them (Bailey, 1987). The implementation of this principle recognises that families have the right to participate with service staff as partners, and have a right to maintain control over the support that they receive. Finally, service provision should also attempt to strengthen family functioning by promoting the capabilities of the family (Kaiser & Hemmeter, 1989). This principle sees families as possessing a range of strengths and capabilities that may assist them to use available resources to meet their own needs.

As a service orientation, family-centered service provision shares many of the components of enabling and empowering approaches (Dunst, Trivette & Deal, 1988). It has also been influenced by the substantial literature on family support and social support in the disciplines of welfare and social services (Gottleib, 1985; Weissbourd, 1990; Wolcott, 1989).

There is anecdotal evidence that the use of a family-centered approach in the delivery of early intervention services has been widely accepted in Australia, at least from the beginning of this decade. For instance, the approach is frequently mentioned in the professional literature in this

country as an example of best practice. However, practical evidence for the acceptance of this orientation is mostly limited to a range of policy statements from the States and Territories.

In NSW the need for the maintenance of a focus on families in early intervention was recognised in an examination of the coordination of early intervention services (NSW Government, 1994). In Victoria, a number of early intervention policy statements that recommended a family-centered approach were published in the early 1990s (Kearns, 1994). Beyond this, it is difficult to determine the extent to which early intervention services in this country are family-centered in orientation.

In the United States, where components of the family-centered approach are mandated (Krauss, 1990), there have been several research studies in this area. Following an analysis of Federal Laws and a survey of administrators and early intervention staff, Dunst and his colleagues (1991) concluded that there had been a movement toward the adoption of family-centered early intervention policies and practices in the United States. More recently, McBride et al. (1993) conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 families and 14 staff members from early intervention services, to determine the extent to which family-centered approaches were being used. They identified several themes associated with the family-centered approach and reported that families expressed general satisfaction with the services they were receiving. They also found that the professionals were aware of and understood the family-centered approach, but that their day-to-day practices varied widely and included some aspects of child-oriented approaches.

Callahan and Olson (1994) surveyed 22 rural early intervention staff on the extent to which they provided opportunities to families for involvement in decision-making, and 90 parents on their level of satisfaction with the support they received from these staff. The results showed a wide variation in the decision-making opportunities provided by staff across services. However, parents indicated that they were very satisfied with the early intervention service they received.

Two studies have examined the extent of family involvement in assessment and decision-making. Bailey, Buysse, Edmondson and Smith (1992) compared professionals' perceptions of family-centered services in four states in the United States. They reported significant differences between typical and ideal practices across the four items of family-centered orientation they measured. This study was replicated in Sweden by Bjorck-Akesson & Granlund (1995), who also included a group of parents in their sample. They found significant differences between families' ratings of typical and ideal practices, and between professionals' ratings of typical and ideal practices. In both cases, more family-centered practices were desired than were provided. For three of the four items on the survey, staff wished to provide significantly more family-centered intervention than families desired.

To date there has been no systematic examination of the extent of agreement between parents and professionals in relation to how family-centered they perceive early intervention services to be, or how family-centered they would like these services to be. For example, although several studies have reported that staff would like to work in more family-centered ways (Bailey et al., 1992; McBride et al., 1993) it is not clear whether families share this goal.

Those studies reporting high family satisfaction with early intervention services (Callahan & Olson, 1994; McBride et al., 1993), have not examined the relationship between this satisfaction and the nature of early intervention service provision. The only study comparing professional and family perceptions used an instrument limited to four items which may not have adequately assessed the family-centered approach (Bjorck-Akesson & Granlund, 1995). Consequently, it is difficult to tell whether families are genuinely happy with the service they receive, or whether they are grateful to receive whatever service may be available to them. Additionally, it is difficult to tell whether families agree with and understand a family-centered approach.

The present study sought to address some of these issues. Specifically, the study attempted to determine the extent of agreement between both families' and professionals' perceptions of

current and desired family-centered early intervention. Some questions addressed by the study were:

1. Is there a significant difference between family and professional perceptions of current and desired service provision?

2. Do families desire early intervention services that are more family-centered?

3. Is there a meaningful relationship between family's level of satisfaction with early intervention services and the extent to which those services are family-centered?

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised all early intervention programs funded by the NSW Department of Community Services (DCS) (N=50) and the NSW Department of School Education (DSE) (N=42) in 1995. Thirteen DCS services could not be contacted by the researchers, and seven DCS services and six DSE services declined to participate in the study. The percentage of services participating in the study were 78% for DCS (N=39) and 86% for DSE (N=36).

The Directors and teachers from the participating services identified 249 staff members (both teaching and non-teaching) associated with the services. A random sample of all families receiving support from these services resulted in 704 families being included in the survey pool. Completed surveys were received from 184 staff members (74% return rate), and from 273 families (39% return rate). The overall return rate was 48%.

Survey instrument

A nine item scale was developed that was based on the nine themes associated with family-centered interventions identified from the qualitative research by McBride and her colleagues (1993). For example, the *attention to family concerns beyond the specific needs of the child* theme, was used to develop the following item: *the staff attend to our family concerns as well as the specific needs of our child.* Each item appeared in the form of a statement to which respondents indicated their degree of agreement on a six point Likert scale (agree strongly to disagree strongly). The maximum scale score was 54, with a higher score indicating that more family-centered practices were being applied. The wording of the items differed slightly for staff and family versions of the survey to make the statements relevant to the respondents. The scale items for the staff survey appear in Table 1.

TABLE 1

FAMILY-CENTERED SCALE ITEMS ON STAFF SURVEY

1.	I attend to family **concerns** as well as the specific needs of the child.
2.	Parents are given a variety of **choices** in the decision-making process.
3.	Improving family members' emotional **well-being** is an important service goal.
4.	I **involve** fathers, siblings and other family members in the support I offer families.
5.	Increasing parents' **confidence** and parenting skills is an important service goal.
6.	I respect family **values** and routines in my interactions and meetings with families.
7.	I give parents the **option** of having a shared role in decision-making that affects them.
8.	I accept parents' right to **choose** their own level of participation in decision-making.
9.	Childrens' developmental **progress** alleviates family stressors.

Staff were asked to respond to the instrument in two ways. Firstly, they were asked to respond to the statements in terms of the way they believed they currently supported families. Secondly, they were asked to respond to the statements in the way they would like to support families. The staff survey form also collected information about the age, qualifications, length of experience in early intervention, and the respondent's primary role in the service.

Families were asked to respond to the instrument in terms of the way they perceived early intervention staff currently supported them, and in terms of how they would like to be supported by the staff. The family survey form also included questions about the age and educational qualifications of the respondent, and their partner (if appropriate), how long their child had attended the early intervention program, and how satisfied they were with the program.

Procedure

Information letters, survey forms and reply paid envelopes were forwarded by the Directors and teachers from the early intervention services to their staff and families to maintain the anonymity of participants. The information letter provided respondents with the opportunity to be interviewed by the researchers if they wished. Three telephone interviews were conducted. During these interviews, questions were asked in the same order that they appeared on the survey form. Approximately two weeks after forwarding the survey package, a reminder letter was also forwarded to participants to encourage their involvement in the study.

Data analysis

The demographic characteristics of staff and families were described. However, the primary purpose of the analysis was to check for any significant differences between the responses of both groups to the two forms of the survey instrument. Descriptive statistics were also used to determine if there was a significant difference between staff and family perceptions about the way support was currently provided. Factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) were used to check the reliability of the survey instrument.

RESULTS

Family-centered scale

Two measures were used to determine the reliability of the family-centered scale. First, principal components factor analysis was used to develop a meaningful factor structure for the staff and the parent version of the scale using responses from the current situation ratings of the survey. The criteria for establishing factors was a eigenvalue for each factor of at least 1.0, and the size of the eigenvalues plotted against the factors (Cattell, 1966). This factor structure was then compared with the respective factor structures from the preferred ratings section of the survey.

For the staff survey, the items loading on the two extracted factors from the current situation version of the scale were identical to those loading on the preferred situation version of the scale. These factors explained 71% and 65% of the variance respectively. For the parent survey, only one meaningful factor was extracted for both current and preferred versions of the scale. This factor explained 62% and 59% of the variance respectively.[1]

The second reliability measure used Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficients to determine internal consistency for the items loading on the extracted factors. For the staff survey, the reliability coefficients for the two subscales were .80 and .56 for the current scale, and .85 and .73 for the preferred scale. For the parent survey, coefficient alpha was .93 and .91, respectively for the single factor for each scale.

Staff characteristics

Over one-third of staff members (N=65, 35.3%) were aged between 35 and 44 years. Less than 11% (n=20) were younger than 25. The majority of staff had a degree (N=87, 47.3%) or diploma or certificate (N=67, 36.4%). Twenty (10.9%) staff members had no formal qualification. Staff had most frequently worked in early intervention from 1 to 5 years (N=72, 39.1%) or from 6 to 10 years (N=56, 30.4%). The role played by these staff is shown in Table 2. The majority (N=78, 42.4%) worked primarily in a teaching role. Most therapists were either speech pathologists (N=14, 48.4%) or occupational therapists (N=8, 29.0%).

TABLE 2

PRIMARY ROLE OF EARLY INTERVENTION STAFF

ROLE	N	%
Centre Director	27	14.8
Teacher	78	42.9
Aide	31	17.0
Therapist	29	15.9
Social worker	8	4.4
Nurse	7	3.8
Consultant	2	1.2
Not identified	2	1.2

The mean current and preferred ratings and the standard deviations for items on the family-centered staff scale appear in Table 3. The ratings show that staff wished to provide more family-centered support across all items. The discrepancy between current and preferred practice was most apparent for the item assessing the involvement of fathers, siblings and other family members.

There was a statistically significant difference between the total scale score for the current and for the preferred support ($t(176)=7.17, p<0.001$). As multiple item comparisons were made, the level for statistical significance was adjusted from 0.05 to 0.005 (Miller, 1966). There were statistically significant differences between the current and preferred ratings of seven items.

TABLE 3

MEAN CURRENT AND PREFERRED RATINGS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ITEMS ON THE STAFF FAMILY-CENTERED SCALE

ITEM NAME	CURRENT		PREFERRED	
	M	SD	M	SD
concern	5.07	1.02	5.28	0.94*
choice	5.14	0.95	5.59	0.73*
well-being	5.15	1.02	5.43	0.82*
involve	4.68	1.10	5.50	0.70*
confidence	5.50	0.72	5.73	0.58*
values	5.50	0.68	5.72	0.59*
option	5.40	0.80	5.70	0.56*
choose	5.32	0.84	5.51	0.83
progress	4.80	1.09	5.04	1.01
total	46.91	4.95	49.58	4.62*

* $p<0.001$

Therapists' total rating for their current level of support (45.80) was significantly less than that of other staff members (47.14, $t(146)=3.19, p<0.01$). The difference was most apparent for the *concern* (therapists 4.81, others 5.12), and *choose* items (therapists 5.06, others 5.37). There was no significant difference between the total preferred level of support ratings for therapists and others.

The four categories for years of experience in early intervention were collapsed into two; up to five years of experience and over five years experience. Less experienced staff members indicated that they used lower levels of family-centered practices (45.77) than more experienced staff (48.13, $t(86)=4.79, <0.001$). This difference was most apparent for *choice* (less experienced 4.96, more experienced 5.36) and *involve* items (less experienced 4.46, more experienced 4.94). The difference between the total preferred level of ratings for less experienced staff and more experienced staff was not significant.

Parent characteristics

Mothers most often completed the survey (N=232, 84.7%). Both the respondent (N=161, 58.5%) and their spouse (N=119, 48.8%) were most likely to be between 25 and 34 years old. Eleven percent of respondents were from single parent families, and the most common qualification for respondents and their spouse was at the trade level. There was no significant association between level of educational qualification and the dependent variables.

Respondents were just as likely to have been involved in the program for less than a year (44.4%) or for between one and three years (48.0%). No parents were very unsatisfied with the support they received from the early intervention program. The vast majority of parents were either satisfied (N=72, 26.5%) or very satisfied (N=193, 70.9%).

The mean current and preferred item ratings and the standard deviations for the family-centered parent scale appear in Table 4. Apart from the *concern* and *well-being* items, parents preferred an increase in the level of family-centered support they currently received. There was a significant difference between the total scale score for the current and for the preferred support ($t(266)=4.74, p<0.001$). There were also statistically significant differences between the ratings for seven items.

TABLE 4

MEAN CURRENT AND PREFERRED RATINGS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR ITEMS ON THE PARENT FAMILY-CENTERED SCALE

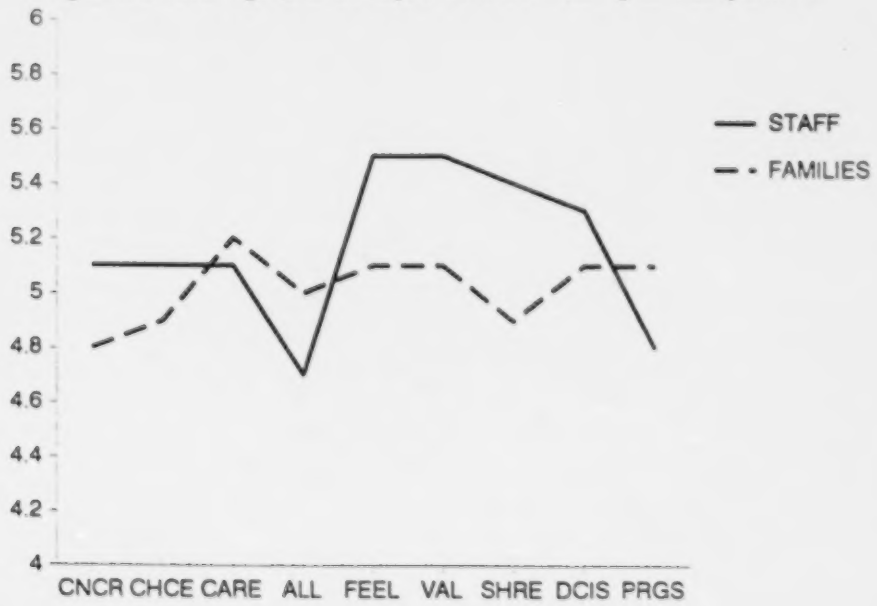
ITEM NAME	CURRENT		PREFERRED	
	M	SD	M	SD
concern	4.84	1.09	4.80	1.17
choice	4.89	1.04	5.30	0.86*
well-being	5.22	0.93	5.04	0.97
involve	5.04	1.10	5.24	0.92*
confidence	5.05	0.99	5.32	0.88*
values	5.14	0.85	5.38	0.85*
option	4.87	1.05	5.28	0.96*
choose	4.93	0.97	5.17	0.93*
progress	5.05	1.12	5.40	0.94*
total	45.29	6.82	47.13	6.36*

* $p<0.001$

Staff and parents

There were some discrepancies between the staff and parent ratings of current service provision. Figure 1 shows the mean ratings for staff and parents of current family-centered practices. For six of the nine items, parents perceived that staff were supporting them at a level lower than staff ratings. For the *well-being*, *involve* and *progress* items, parent ratings were higher than staff ratings. There was a statistically significant difference between the total current ratings for staff and parents ($t(444)=2.72, p<0.01$).

Figure 1: Mean ratings for staff and parents of current family-centered practices



There was a more consistent pattern in the preferred ratings for staff and parents. Figure 2 shows the mean ratings for staff and parents of preferred family-centered practices. For only one item, *progress*, were parent ratings higher than staff ratings. There was a significant difference between the total preferred ratings for staff and parents ($t(442)=4.41, p<0.001$).

Figure 2: Mean ratings for staff and parents of preferred family-centered practices

DISCUSSION

During the three decades since the early intervention movement began, there have been many changes in its direction and approach to supporting families. These changes have been influenced by the growth in our knowledge about both typical and atypical child development, the results of research in several social sciences, and the early intervention experiences of practitioners and of parents of children with special needs. One might expect that the execution of these changes in direction may differ across early intervention services according to the idiosyncratic characteristics of geographic areas, programs and the needs of different groups. However, the results of the present research indicate that family-centered approaches are being implemented to a large extent in NSW early intervention programs.

This study has given some indication of how early intervention staff and parents participating in early intervention programs in NSW perceive existing programs in terms of the principles of family-centred early intervention practice. It is important to note that this study was concerned with early intervention staff and parent *perceptions* of how families are supported by staff. Actual practice was not observed or documented in any way. Additionally, respondents were provided with only nine categories to rate and were not asked to elaborate on their responses.

As in other studies concerned with family-centred programs (e.g.McBride et al., 1993; Callahan et al., 1994), most parents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support they were receiving. As the number of parents who were dissatisfied was very low it was not possible to assess the extent of the relationship between the provision of family-centered practices and level of parental satisfaction. Consequently, whether family-centered practices

are a predictor of parental satisfaction is yet to be empirically determined.

Overall current support provided was perceived by staff members to be greater than that perceived by parents. Although both parents and staff indicated that they would prefer a more family-centred approach, there were differences in emphasis. For example, parents did not want staff to increase their attention to family concerns or to demonstrate more care for the family, but they did want an increase in the variety of choices in decisions affecting them.

It is unclear whether these differences indicate that parents are very happy with the way staff attend to family concerns and the extent to which they care about their family, or that they do not consider these aspects of a program of great importance. The latter interpretation is, to some extent, supported by the responses to item 9 which was concerned with the child's progress as a factor in reducing family stress. Parents' rating for this item was higher than for any other item for both current and preferred practice. Staff indicated that focus on the child's progress was important. However, improving parents' confidence and parenting skills, as well as staff demonstrating more respect for family values and routines during interactions and meetings with families, was of greater concern to staff.

Parents indicated that although staff currently attend to their family concerns as well as those of the child, they did not see this as an area in which they needed more support. Parent rating of this item was the lowest of all items for both current and preferred practice. However, staff perceived this item as an important aspect of family centred early intervention and indicated a need for improvement of services in this area. Additionally, parents agreed that the staff cared about their family, but they did not rate this item as highly as other items as an area for improvement.

Overall, results indicate that staff are more concerned about the practices that are generally believed to demonstrate a family-centred approach than are parents. It could be, as McBride et al. (1993) suggest, that parents are unaware of the changes that have taken place over the last few years in the focus of early intervention programs and that their responses on this survey were influenced by their expectation that early intervention programs are supposed to be more child-centred. It may also be the case that Australian families are more reluctant than American families to share their personal problems with others outside the family circle.

In conclusion, this study shows that family-centered practices in early intervention services appear to be widely implemented in one Australian state, and that the vast majority of parents are satisfied with the level of support they receive from these services. Although there were significant differences between parent and staff ratings of the actual and desired level of implementation of family-centered practice, the differences were not large enough to constitute a gulf between parents and families.

While the level of consumer satisfaction and the degree of staff implementation are important components of any assessment of the assumed efficacy of family-centered early intervention, they are not enough on their own to constitute a valid assessment of the approach. Although there may be strong philosophical grounds on which to support the approach, there is also a need to check whether, as expected, some outcomes from family-centered practice are empowering for parents and strengthen family functioning.

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AUTHORS

Ian Dempsey, Lecturer in Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308. Specialisations: Community service provision for people with a disability, educational services for students with intellectual disability.

Anne Carruthers, Lecturer in Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308. Specialisations: Early intervention programs.

1. *The factor solutions for the staff and the parent scales are available from the authors.*

AN EXAMINATION OF A YOUNG CHILD'S RESPONSES TO PERFORMANCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR ARTS CURRICULA.

Louie Suthers and Veronicah Larkin
Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University

ABSTRACT

Performances in the arts for child audiences may offer experiences beyond those available in educational settings and homes. This case study of one four-year-old child describes her responses to a children's opera. The child's responses before, during, and after the performance were systematically observed and analysed. Based on these results, the study offers some practical strategies for those planning arts performance experiences for young children.

INTRODUCTION

Performance in drama, dance, music, puppetry or combinations of these arts can be an exciting encounter for young children. Arts performances often have powerful and long-lasting effects on children. Nevertheless the impact of performance on young children is an area in which there has been little reported research. The importance of performance experiences for children is maintained by writers including Andress (1980), Smigeil (1993) and Suthers (1993). They stress the importance of the performance acknowledging the developmental levels of its child audience and suggest introducing 'such minimal concert courtesies as applauding and appropriate listening' (Andress, 1980:180). Writers including Beaty (1996), Chenfeld (1995), Holt (1989) and Larkin (1994) affirm the importance of providing opportunities for children to encounter real life experiences, cultural rituals of society and to go beyond the perimeters of their homes and educational settings. Piscitelli (1991) believes that '...when this opportunity can be taken in a spirit of joyful enthusiasm, children, as connoisseurs of life, have a tremendous amount to gain' (p.214).

This case study examines the responses of a young child to such a performance, an opera for children. The opera *Grandma's shoes* is an Australian work which was first performed in Sydney in 1995. Based on a children's book of the same name, the libretto was by the book's author Libby Hathorn, music composed by Graeme Koehne and the production was directed and designed by Kim Carpenter from Theatre of Image. The performance combined music, drama, literature, movement, puppetry and visual arts.

DESIGN

By attending a performance of *Grandma's shoes* with a young child and his or her parent/s, the researchers planned to gather data related to a range of questions:

- Would the child react to the performance venue?
- How would the child respond during the performance?
- What kind of post-performance responses would the child display?
- Would the child respond to aspects of the performance at later times; and if so what form or forms would these responses take?

The use of a case study as a research methodology is endorsed by Burns (1994), Klein (1990), Merriam (1988), Silverman (1992) and Yin (1989). Yin (1989) defines a case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context; when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used' (p.23). This study uses a single-case holistic

design (Yin, 1989:46–50). The subject chosen for the study was to be a 'typical case selection' (Merriam, 1988:50); a four-year-old who had been taken by family member/s to performances.

The subject selected was Sarah, aged four years and 10 months. She attended a day care centre five days each week. Sarah was chosen because she was representative of those four-year-old children observed by the researchers, who were both enrolled in an educational setting, and had had some experience of performance attendance. Sarah had attended concerts at her older brother's school and a Wiggles concert. She had also been learning the piano for six months and had attended piano recitals at her teacher's studio.

Prior and post-performance, the main methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews (Burns, 1994) with Sarah's mother, Alex and Sarah's day care teacher, Marjorie. During the performance and immediately before and after it, data were collected by the researchers using a performance observation schedule. The researchers logged the child's responses, time sampling at five-minute intervals. They observed the child's visual engagement with performance; physical responses (such as moving or clapping); physical positioning on chair; verbal responses; and any additional responses (unanticipated behaviours).

A profile of Sarah's development across a range of domains was compiled on the basis of a number of semi-structured interviews with Sarah's mother and her day care teacher. Sarah was the younger of two children from an Anglo Australian family living in a middle class suburb of Sydney. Both her parents were engaged in fulltime professional work. Sarah's physical development was normal and she enjoyed good health. She enjoyed stories read to her at home and day care, and was able to recall major events of the narrative and their sequence. Sarah spoke clearly and confidently and conversed happily with her family, friends and strangers. Playing with words and inventing rhymes and songs were characteristic behaviours. She also remembered the words of songs, even those with several verses, easily and accurately.

CASE STUDY

A week prior to the performance Sarah's mother, Alex, explained the forthcoming visit to the opera. Her briefing was minimal explaining to her daughter the nature of opera and a precis of the plot that consisted entirely of 'it's a story about a little girl and her grandma who's died'. This scant preparation was not by design — Alex was not familiar with the book or the opera. However, Alex reported that Sarah did not ask any questions and was simply excited by the idea of an outing.

The performance was held in the Joan Sutherland Room at the Australian Opera Centre on Saturday, October 21, 1995, at two o'clock. The space was very large with a high ceiling. The area used for the performance was L-shaped and the remaining portion of the room was set up with rows of chairs. The stage area set up for the performance was in full view and accessible to the audience. There were two beds each covered in white fabric. One piled up with pillows was the little girl's and the other was Grandma's. Grandma's personal effects including gloves, stockings, brush and dentures were made from paper and arranged on her bed. Off to one side was a piano and the area for the musicians. Three water colour paintings of scenes from the opera were displayed on wooden easels at the entrance to the room.

Child response to the performance venue

Prior to the performance Sarah showed some knowledge of the conventions of opera and performance. She explained that in opera '...the people don't talk, they only sing'. She also knew that 'you can have food before and after but you can't eat food when it's on'. When Sarah entered the performance space her eyes tracked around the entire area. She looked up and around the room as she followed her mother to the seats. Soon after she was seated Sarah knelt up on her chair and scanned the audience. On her own initiative she then left her seat

and went to examine the props and stage area. She was able to identify some of Grandma's artefacts but not all. Sarah did not seek clarification of these unknown items.

Child response during the performance

The performance lasted 50 minutes. When the opera began Sarah was quite attentive. She had no negative reactions to the unfamiliar sounds of operatic voices despite their volume and strong vibrato. From time to time Sarah's focus of attention seemed to wander to things in the performance venue that attracted her, such as the large bank of windows on one side of the room. After some time away, she would refocus on the performance. These mental diversions did not appear to hamper her understanding of the narrative. In a manner similar to the child, who during a story appears to be inattentive and distracted, but is able to retell the plot in detail afterwards, Sarah's understanding of the opera did not seem to be affected by her apparent variations in attentiveness. Nor was there any observable change in her levels of engagement as the performance proceeded; she did not become more restless or less attentive as time passed.

Some aspects of the performance seemed to evoke particularly animated responses from Sarah. She sat forward in her seat, transfixed by the action. Whenever the puppets were used or there was movement or dancing Sarah watched with rapt attention. Highly dramatic moments such as when the little girl first put on her Grandma's shoes and visually interesting staging such as a singer perched atop a 2-metre high ladder were obviously fascinating for Sarah.

Sarah also appeared to identify strongly with the little girl, the central character. Wilson (1985) states that '... individual members of the audience may identify with one character more than others, usually the character that appeals as being most like their actual selves or their ideal selves...' (p.55). Sarah's emotional involvement with the character of the little girl seemed to increase sharply in the second scene in which the mother sat on the bed and sang a lullaby to her daughter. Sarah clearly identified with this and could relate it to her own experience. By contrast, the opening scene, Grandma's funeral, interested her but was outside her own experience.

The researchers observed that at no time did Sarah question either them or her mother about any aspect of the performance. She occasionally made comments in a stage whisper, such as 'They're Grandma's shoes'.

During the performance Sarah also spontaneously drew. This was an unanticipated activity. Perhaps she was inspired by the researchers' constant note taking, or the model of the watercolours displayed for the audience to view. Sarah leant across and asked one of the researchers for pen and paper. She made two drawings of the performance, the first was a quick sketch and the second was similar, depicting most of the same objects but in far greater detail. Duncum (1993) found that the practice of making several visual representations of the same subject matter was common with children of this age. Sarah's more detailed second drawing appears as Figure 1.

The drawing shows her depiction of the little girl in her bedroom. Sarah volunteered labels for the features of her visual representation. The little girl's bed is at the bottom left and Grandma's bed is at the top right. The other objects are all Grandma's belongings. Clockwise from bottom right they are her dentures, glove, stockings, lamp and globe which Sarah confidently explained was 'a circle with a map in it'. This drawing is very much a visual record of Sarah's observations and is not unlike some young children's early map making endeavours (Perry & Conroy, 1994).

Figure 1: Sarah's second drawing

Whilst the framing was not usual in Sarah's drawings, her teacher reported that representations of the sun were common in Sarah's drawings at day care. It is possible that Sarah drew the frame to signify the performance space or to represent some notion that the performance was outside her usual experiences. Similarly the birds around the border may have been inspired by the paper puppet birds that flew out of a book during the performance or they may simply be patterning.

At the end of the performance Sarah applauded along with the rest of the audience, again displaying some knowledge of performance conventions such as those discussed by Cohen (1988) and O'Neill (1988).

Child post-performance response

As in many children's performances, at the conclusion there was an opportunity for children to revisit the performing area and talk with the performers.

Sarah's first reaction was to go to the piano that had been used by the little girl at the very opening of the opera. Just as the little girl had done, Sarah knelt up on the piano stool and picked out notes on the keyboard. After replicating this aspect of the performance she played *Twinkle, twinkle* with one finger. Next she revisited the bedroom and along with other children carefully examined the paper props. Sarah did not ask any questions related to these props. This was very much sensory exploration of the props with no re-enactment from the performance.

Sarah then began to talk with some of the performers. This enabled her to confirm their existence outside their roles in the performance. For Sarah, most of the debriefing was social interaction rather than a series of opportunities to seek meaning about the performance. She did speak to the singer who had been on top of the ladder — 'You were on the ladder,' then 'Why were you up on the ladder?'

In talking with performers and the researchers during this post-performance time, Sarah had clear recollections of significant aspects of the production, knowledge of the main characters

and a reasonable understanding of the narrative. Her only disappointment was that the singer who had been the little girl in the opera was not available to talk with her during the debriefing.

The researchers concluded that the experience had been a positive one for Sarah; she was happy and confident, she interacted with many new people and she was excited by the event. When Alex told her it was time to leave, Sarah did not want to go. She left smiling and waving to the performers with whom she had been talking and when one performer bent down to hug her goodbye, Sarah kissed her warmly and unselfconsciously.

Child response to the performance at later times

Over the week following the performance Sarah talked to her family about the opera and told her friends at day care about it. Her other response in the weeks following the performance, at home and at day care, was a strong desire to wear high heeled shoes during some play episodes. She had not done this previously. 'I wish you had golden shoes [with high heels] for me to wear,' she had told her mother two weeks after the opera.

Eight weeks after the performance, at Christmas, Sarah was given a copy of the book *Grandma's shoes* by her mother. This prompted lots of requests from Sarah for the book to be read but also a flurry of original songs and drawings. One of the songs appears as Figure 2. Sarah's words for her song were:

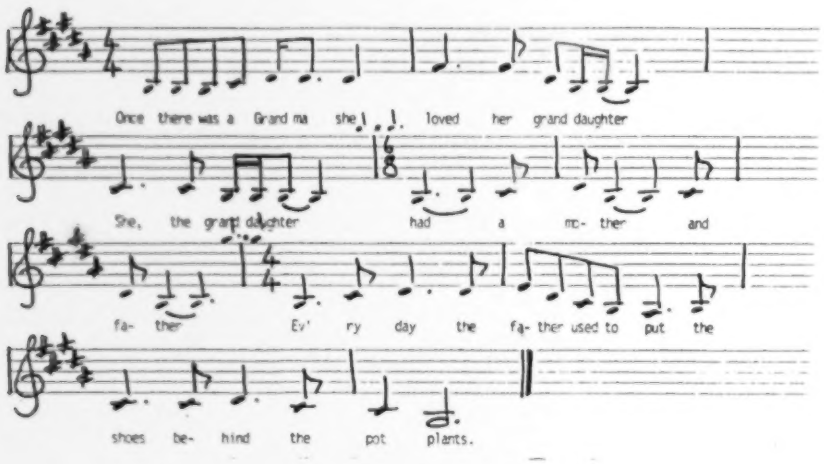
'Once there was a Grandma, she loved her granddaughter
She, the granddaughter, had a mother and father
Ev'ry day the father used to put the shoes behind the pot plants.'

Once there was a Grand ma she, loved her grand daughter
She, the grand daughter had a mo- ther and
fa- ther Ev' ry day the fa- ther used to put the
shoes be- hind the pot plants.

Figure 2: Sarah's song

This song is clearly inspired by *Grandma's shoes*. The lyrics were improvised spontaneously by Sarah. This is clear from the second line when she sang 'she', Sarah obviously realised that this could be ambiguous and clarified it by adding 'the granddaughter'. This amendment in turn temporarily unsettled the metre (changing it from $^{4}_{4}$ to $^{6}_{8}$). The melody is original and not an adaptation of any standard song. It shows a well developed sense of tonality, remaining in B major throughout. There is also some effective melodic repetition — the opening of the song and the third line 'Every day...' and on 'a mother and father' use the same sequence of pitches — B. C♯. D♯. A clear sense of phrasing is also evident; there are three distinct lines of text matched with three clear melodic phrases.

CONCLUSIONS

The researchers concluded that attendance at the performance of the children's opera *Grandma's shoes* had been an enjoyable experience for Sarah. She displayed interest in the performance environment — the room, the stage area, and the props. She was able to make sense of the basic storyline and characters of the opera, even though as a genre, opera was entirely new to her. While basically engaged with the performance Sarah's attention did wander from time to time, however, the use of puppetry or movement and dance brought her focus back to the production. She identified strongly with the little girl and familiar contexts and relationships associated with a family. The debriefing time after the performance allowed Sarah to meet with performers, explore the props in more detail and re-examine the performing space.

After the performance Sarah talked about the opera with her family and at day care. She incorporated wearing high-heeled shoes into her play. Two to three months after the performance she created a series of songs, raps and art work stimulated by *Grandma's shoes*.

Within the limits of a single child case study methodology there are nevertheless several aspects of performance which may be helpful to practitioners and parents/families in planning performance experiences for young children. The researchers' study of Sarah's responses to the performance experience highlighted a range of issues.

Firstly, some familiarity with performance conventions such as applauding, attending to the performers and generally remaining seated unless the production invites closer participation, may be useful. This accords with Andress's (1980) views on introducing young children to performance. Some familiarity with the basic story line or a song that will be performed may help young children relate more easily to the performance. Sarah's knowledge of the performance was minimal but appeared to be adequate preparation for her. Related to this issue is the selection of a particular performance. Again some component that strikes a familiar note with a child audience member may positively colour his/her response to the entire performance. Sarah appeared to identify strongly with the central character, the little girl, as well as responding to the familiarity of accustomed rituals such as preparing for bed.

It is difficult to prepare children for the performance environment as most venues are large and unlike homes and children's centres. Allowing the children to take in the space and the audience may help them feel more settled once the performance begins. Not all performance spaces are able to let children move around and explore the space as Sarah did, but allowing time for them to visually scan the location may be beneficial.

Some level of distractedness is to be anticipated when young children, particularly under fives, are watching a performance that may last 30, 40 or even 50 minutes. As long as the child is not disturbing other members of the audience, shifts in concentration away from the stage are probably to be expected. Some adults attending a play or concert report that their mind strays elsewhere. Mental time away from the performance action did not appear to adversely affect Sarah's enjoyment of the performance or her understanding of the opera.

An opportunity to debrief, to interact with performers, may assist in enhancing the child's experience of the performance. It can provide children with a chance to talk to performers, ask questions, seek clarification or simply interact. The chance to visit (or revisit) the performing area and handle the props, costumes or scenery may be a useful strategy for children attending performances. Such opportunities provide a context for the child to ask questions or enact components of the performance.

Quality performance experiences may have the potential to stimulate children to generate their own original, artistic responses. Sarah created drawings, songs and raps stimulated by *Grandma's shoes*. Less well equipped verbally than adults, young children may not be inclined to discuss their reactions but may well express themselves in other ways. Piscitelli (1991) notes in relation to young children's responses to visual arts that 'while verbal responses were prevalent, several other reactions were observed' (p.204). Reactions to art

works included moving, making sounds and dramatic and imaginative play. Similarly, children may react to the performing arts by responses such as singing, puppeteering, painting, dramatic enactment, modelling with dough or clay or dancing.

While Sarah did some of the drawings during and soon after the performance, she did not begin to generate the songs until some weeks later. This may indicate that children's responses to performance continue after the event for some time as they pause, consider and reflect upon a performance experience, as many adults do. This view is supported by the work of Deriu (1985) and Henley (1993). Certainly casual anecdotal evidence would indicate that many adults who had the opportunity to experience a quality performance as young children still remember it vividly and talk of its lasting impact, and in some cases, the defining nature of one single occasion. It may be helpful in educational contexts then, for post-performance follow-up not to be confined to the days immediately after the performance. Provision for and nurturing of continued responses over weeks or even months may be useful in planning follow up activities.

As with all aspects of the early childhood curriculum, the engagement of parents and family with performance opportunities may enhance the experience for the young child. In this study, Sarah was clearly confident and relaxed at the opera performance. The presence of her mother would almost certainly have contributed to her feelings of well being and positive disposition towards the occasion. Clearly it is not always possible for working families to share in performances at their child's centre. However, for their role to be expanded beyond notification of performance times and payment for same, documentation of the event may be possible. The display of photographic records of children at the performance, the performance itself (if copyright permits), children's comments and post-performance responses such as enactment, drama play, dance or art work may stimulate parental fostering of at-home responses from the child. A video or audio recording of such responses would be a useful means of communicating to parents and families the children's ideas and reactions.

Finally to maximise the impact of performances on young children, their planning as an integral and integrated component of the arts curriculum would be beneficial. Preparation for the performance through drama, movement, music, storytelling and visual arts activities could be planned. Followup experiences afterwards would allow children to continue to reflect upon, work through and respond to the performance over time. By incorporating performance into the curriculum, the ensuing benefits for young children attending as audience members may well be maximised.

The arts of music, drama, dance and puppetry are often grouped together and labelled performing arts. These arts are live arts, based on the realisation of creative ideas by skilled performers. Performances are interactive to the extent that performers require performance opportunities with an audience, whose reactions impact on the performers. By introducing young children to performance in the arts, they can be acquainted not only with the conventions but also the magic of performance. Performers communicate in many ways — verbal and non-verbal, through the senses. As Harwood (1984) states, performance can evoke intense responses — cognitive, emotional, physical and social in audience members. Young children may express their reactions to a performance in diverse ways including laughing, crying, dancing, clapping, singing, drawing, dramatic play or by thinking about or creating their own original artistic responses. Sharing performances with young children can introduce them to the powerful impact of the arts; an impact that for some individuals may extend far beyond the early childhood years.

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AUTHORS

Louie Suthers, lecturer, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, NSW, 2109. Specialisations: Early childhood music education, early childhood arts, play in the early childhood curriculum.

Veronicah Larkin, lecturer, Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, NSW, 2109. Specialisations: Early childhood puppetry, early childhood drama and early childhood arts.

TEACHING DILEMMAS AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS IN CHILD CARE CENTRES

Judith Burton
Queensland University of Technology

ABSTRACT

Teachers' practical knowledge about connections between their efforts to create curriculum and the employment relations at their workplace was investigated over a three year period using survey, participant observation and case study methods. This paper draws on case study data to propose that dimensions of the employment relationship can be viewed as both a source of teaching dilemmas and a resource for managing dilemmas. It concludes by proposing that analysis of employment relations processes could enrich the knowledge early childhood teachers bring to, and develop through, their work as curriculum decision-makers.

Recent studies of teachers and teaching give greater attention to relationships among teaching contexts, teachers' practical knowledge, and enacted curricula. As a contribution to this body of work this study grapples with the problem of understanding the knowledge teachers use to create curriculum within workplace demands. Current notions of context are very broad and there is a tendency among educational researchers 'to under-theorise the social milieu in which curriculum is enacted' (Halliwell, 1992:357). As a consequence, relationships between contexts and teaching decisions are not well understood. Researchers often 'emphasise the characteristics of particular individuals, and the full array of context variables continue to be largely ignored' (King, 1992:43).

The study investigated the usefulness of employment relations theories and concepts for explaining how workplace demands enter into teachers' thoughts and actions in creating curriculum with young children. This paper examines the decisions of two qualified early childhood teachers, Lesley and Irene (case names are fictitious), who feature in two of four case studies of teachers at work in child care centres. The focus for analysis is the intersection of teacher beliefs about what constitutes an appropriate curriculum for young children, and prevailing employment relations in the places where they make curriculum decisions. Concentrating on this dimension enabled the identification of points of contact between teachers' knowledge about children and learning, the practices they valued and the ways they negotiated constraints and opportunities within the work context.

Lesley and Irene worked in places where long hours of work and staff turnover made it difficult to establish and maintain consistency in daily routines, and in relationships among adults and children. These teachers found the potential for inconsistency to be a major decision-making issue for they believed that children are best able to learn and develop within consistent environments. Their attention to the social processes within which learning and development will occur fits well into perspectives on curriculum developed by theorists such as Connelly and Clandinin (1988), and Cornbleth (1990), who view curriculum as a complex social process in which teachers 'learners, subject matter and milieu are in dynamic interaction' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992:363).

CREATING CURRICULUM IN THE WORKPLACE

This multidisciplinary study is informed by three bodies of literature. Literature regarding teachers' knowledge-in-use as they create curriculum provided a focus for data collection. Recent research into the early childhood curriculum is highlighting the role of context in

shaping teachers' curriculum knowledge and practice. As Connelly and Clandinin (1988) note, 'all curriculum situations exist in a context and exert influences on the curriculum' (p.96). Research investigating curriculum from teachers' perspectives suggests that 'contexts inevitably enter into the curriculum implementation process' (Halliwell, 1992:357) not only influencing the parameters of actual practice but also shaping teacher knowledge as knowledge 'becomes situated with ... experience' (Doyle, 1992:509). The second body of literature, which views teaching as 'work', informed the comparative analysis of workplace variables in a range of settings in which early childhood teachers apply and develop their curriculum knowledge. Together these bodies of literature contribute towards a recognition of the extent of teachers' practical knowledge and an understanding that 'our curriculum decisions are framed within the particular social and cultural context in which we live—both in terms of our working lives and our broader living contexts' (McLean, 1994:76).

The language used by the two teachers, whose work is discussed below, reveals a depth of knowledge about the salience of context. Centre documents present a view of the curriculum as constructed 'within the framework of predetermined physical, temporal, interpersonal and organisational factors' (case document, *Philosophy of Care and Education*, June 1995:4). The teacher-Director, Lesley said: 'I don't really talk about curriculum or program. I talk mainly about an environment and how I work within that environment'. The teacher-group leader, Irene, stated that her 'alertness about children and availability to them' operated within the 'framework of all that is in place' at the centre in terms of the centre philosophy, adults' knowledge, and the physical environment. The third body of literature concerning employment relations has been central to theorising about the 'framework' and 'environment' within which these teachers apply and develop their practical knowledge. This literature supports the identification and analysis of dimensions of teachers' work contexts, such as the nature of relationships between managers and workers and the ways that work in child care settings is structured and regulated.

What are 'employment relations'?

The term 'employment relations' refers to both the legal relationship between employers and employees and 'the nature and quality of the day to day transactions' that take place between managers and workers (Sutcliffe & Callus, 1994:58). The study of employment relations draws on understandings from industrial relations and human resource management literature to investigate the 'problems and possibilities' inherent in the 'mix of common and competing interests' held by people who work together (Boxall, 1995:123). Employment relations issues, such as hiring staff, can be viewed from a number of perspectives depending on whether the focus is on outcome or process, the formal or the informal (see Fig. 1).

	Informal	Formal
Process	Workplace employment relations	Arbitration & trade union and employer association negotiation
Outcome	Custom & practice	Awards & Enterprise agreements

Figure 1: Formality and informality in employment relations processes & outcomes

Curriculum may be viewed from a perspective which recognises only formality and outcome: where curriculum is defined as a course of prescribed study. In a similar way, employment relations can be seen as deterministic and prescriptive although the relationship between legal contracts, such as industrial awards, and what happens at workplaces is, as with curriculum prescriptions, neither linear nor uncontested. Employment relations are partly structured by

legal contracts. The variation between formal employment relations outcomes and workplace conduct has been described using the notion of custom and practice (Brown, 1973). Workplace behaviour develops over time as people informally negotiate and re-negotiate how work is organised and performed. Patterns of behaviour at particular workplaces come to differ from formal agreements, become established and gain a sense of legitimacy.

Custom and practice rules are 'governed by a reciprocity relationship' (Brown, 1973:84). One such custom and practice rule at a studied centre was established through the Director adopting a practice of not taking tea or lunch breaks. Her example was followed, and thereby legitimated, by the other full-time teacher. Both teachers offered similar educational and organisational reasons for not taking breaks. This unwritten rule was challenged when a newly-employed teacher attempted to negotiate a change to her roster to access her legal entitlement to tea breaks. The other teachers perceived this as a lack of willingness and commitment. The existence and operation of such custom and practice rules illustrates that analysis of workplace relations must consider the importance of tradition in determining the nature and quality of relations between people at work (Sutcliffe & Callus, 1994:43).

The development, structure and maintenance of employment relations

A study of employment relations also requires a consideration of the influence of wider issues as 'inter-related, economic, legal and social dimensions ... serve to indicate the manner in which employment relations develop, are structured and maintained' (Fells, 1989:472). Two structural features of child care services are briefly referred to here as an indication of how industry features are implicated in the formation and maintenance of particular employment relations: that centres are small workplaces and that child care is a service industry.

Most child care centres are small workplaces and, unlike schools, there is a large number of heterogeneous employers. Industrial relations literature suggests that these two factors influence both employer and employee behaviour. Sutcliffe and Kitay (1988) report that employees in small business tend to be less able to organise industrially and less likely to employ direct action and that small business employers tend to be less likely to comply with awards, to pay less than larger firms and to expect workers to 'take wider responsibilities, and ... be more flexible in their attitudes to what constitutes acceptable work roles' (p.529).

Small business employers were also found to be more reliant on 'the efforts of key groups of employees', in particular employees with managerial, supervisory or customer relations functions who, by virtue of the positions they occupy, have discretionary power over the organisation and performance of work (Sutcliffe & Kitay, 1988:527). For example, Lesley had a considerable degree of discretion in relation to both service delivery and work organisation. Her responsibilities included deciding centre philosophy and grouping structure, recruiting and rostering of staff, allocating tasks and supervising work. Although she generally exercised her positional power within the constraints of the budget she also sought to renegotiate spending limits on a number of occasions. For example, she negotiated with her employer for funds to employ additional staff. During these negotiations she was able to argue that there were sufficient funds available from the previous year. This points to the role played by industry economics in the development of particular employment relations. As a service industry, particular pressures are exerted on employers as labour costs constitute a much higher proportion of costs than in manufacturing industries.

RESEARCH PROCESS

This study of teaching was designed to explore how teachers in child care centres experienced dimensions of the industrial relations context and to describe teachers' knowledge about acting within work relationships to manage teaching dilemmas. A range of research methods was used to identify, document and represent teachers' practical knowledge about creating curriculum. Case studies were a major data source. Two other data sources, a postal survey and participant observation of teachers' involvement in the process of amending their award, were important for informing the construction, conduct and analysis of the case studies.

In designing a research strategy to access those employment relations matters which were important to teachers, the notion of dilemmas became both methodologically and theoretically important. Talking with teachers as their dilemmas unfolded and asking them about the ways they tried to manage them led to the creation of negotiated stories of practice. According to Carter (1993) 'story is a distinctive mode of explanation characterised by an intrinsic multiplicity of meanings ... [which] accommodates ambiguity and dilemma as central figures or themes' (p.6). These stories have been incorporated into case studies which illustrate 'events as they occur in real life' and enable a consideration of 'a broad set of teacher-related concerns' (Fleet, Duffie & Patterson, 1995:83). Exploring and describing the teaching dilemmas as they unfolded within the employment context provided a 'strategy for strengthening and bringing together studies of action and of context in meaningful ways' (Goodson, 1990:310).

The data presented here was collected by participant observation and semi-structured, open-ended, audio-taped interviews conducted over a period of 12 months. Teacher collaboration was central to the definition and development of the stories of practice and the subsequent case studies. Tape transcripts and field notes were used to produce documents which collated the teachers' practical knowledge within categories determined by the researcher. These documents initially served to identify and describe teachers' dilemmas, clarify teachers' meanings, and focus discussion and reflection. Where possible teachers' language was preserved within the theoretical re-description. For example, the relationship between Irene and Lesley is described, using their words, as a 'generous' 'partnership'.

The data presented here is from two teachers working in a 58-place long day (11 hours) care centre in suburban Brisbane. It is sponsored by a non-profit organisation. The children, from babies to preschoolers, are cared for in four groups. Each group has its own large playground. At the end of the data collection period the centre employed 19 staff members. Lesley had worked as a teacher for 30 years, Irene for four years. Lesley had been the centre's teaching Director since it opened seven years ago. Irene was a mature age graduate who joined the staff at the beginning of 1992. This was her first teaching position.

In discussing the following teaching dilemmas it is noted that data presented here is confined to relations between these two teachers at the workplace. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss powerful structures beyond the workplace which impact on teachers' work (e.g., the Industrial Relations Commission and State mechanisms of funding and regulation) or to address the role of gender in shaping both the nature and quality of employment relations in child care. Also this study is delimited to those employment relations issues which these teachers expressed as relevant at that time. In this respect the study has been an iterative and reflective process. This paper contributes to the understanding of employment structures which other teachers may encounter when working in similar environments and perhaps offer them strategies they could use to manage their dilemmas.

TWO TEACHING DILEMMAS

The teaching dilemmas discussed here illustrate both the way employment relations enter into efforts to create curriculum and how teachers use their knowledge about acting within these employment relations to establish custom and practice arrangements more supportive of their educational aims. Both teaching dilemmas revolve around the organisation of staff working hours. Both Lesley and Irene were concerned about the consistency of the interpersonal environment which the children experienced. Their dilemmas are also linked because the generous partnership they had developed at work was a valuable resource for designing and implementing dilemma management strategies.

Lesley's dilemma involved the reorganisation of staff rosters to implement a 38-hour week. The main difficulty she experienced with this task was finding ways to maintain her educational ideal of keeping the number of caregivers who interacted with the children to a minimum within the organisational context of needing more part-time staff to enable the shortening of hours for full-time staff without loss of pay. She spoke about a 'need to rethink our ideas about what's ideal'.

Irene's dilemma involved her experience that, at times, she did not have enough energy to work at a level she felt the children 'deserved'. She reported that 'energy levels greatly impact on how you interact with the children'. The main difficulty she experienced was finding ways to work with children which satisfied her professional beliefs within 'the labour process context of the 'constant and varied' demands of the work.'

Lesley: the teacher-Director

Lesley referred to the task of reorganising the rosters as being 'an enormous problem' and she was concerned about the increasing number of staff who were interacting with the children. Lesley believed it was 'far better' to have fewer people around but she also knew that more people did not 'necessarily add trauma, if they stay.... although numbers of people are difficult, it's the numbers plus the movement in child care'. Lesley held an 'ideal' that fewer staff should work with children yet she had found that long working hours contributed to high levels of turnover:

> *Last year, [having organised the rosters to provide] continuity of care for children, I felt I had neglected the staff. They were working nine and a half hours a day ... and by the time their rostered day off a month came they were exhausted. So I think we have to get a balance between children and staff ... because they don't keep going and they move out of the industry.*

Lesley needed to find alternative ways of organising work to promote consistency. The main way she did this was to have 'a philosophy ... right through the whole centre ... so that the children have every opportunity ... to blossom with the flow'. With this strategy staff were expected to work within the centre philosophy to create a consistent interpersonal and physical environment where children could be successful, discover, feel safe and relaxed. For this strategy to be successful staff would have to stay at the centre and build up knowledge and experience and this led Lesley to decide to alter the rosters and implement a 38-hour week, although it was not legally required.

Irene: teacher-group leader

Irene spoke of often feeling tired and said, 'Ideally, I would like to have fewer contact hours'. She reported that when she was relaxed and refreshed she experienced what children did differently and was able to respond to and interact with them in more 'immediate, personal and individual' ways. Some of Irene's workplace strategies to manage this dilemma involved changes to her own practice. One strategy was doing program documentation, preparation and maintenance tasks outside her paid rostered hours. This strategy enabled her to feel more successful in her work as she could give children and parents her immediate attention thereby contributing to better transitions and less time away from children. Irene spoke of making a 'conscious decision' to 'drop ... practical agenda[s]' and 'get in early' to meet children's needs. She found that this strategy led to a 'contented atmosphere' and a 'more satisfying day' for the children. Another instance of this strategy was when she came over a weekend and did landscaping to improve the safety and aesthetics of the environment. Irene said the landscaping made her work 'run smoother' and improved her 'pleasure in the job' because she was not continually having to speak to children in a 'controlling way'.

Irene continued to manage her teaching dilemma by working outside her paid hours for two reasons. One, because she found it did improve her ability to act on her knowledge about creating curriculum and two, because of her relationship with Lesley. Irene used the word 'generosity' to describe how she experienced their relationship. When I asked Irene if she received time-in-lieu for her landscaping work she said she did not expect financial reward but, 'in the knowledge' that she did such work, Lesley had organised for her to take accrued rostered days off in a block. When I asked Irene if this time had been formally counted up she said, 'No, it's done in the spirit of generosity.... you've been generous with your time, we'll be generous with your holidays'. She reported liking that arrangement as it seemed more 'human' to her.

Negotiation and discretion within the employment relationship

The relationship the teachers had developed over time was a valuable resource for managing their teaching dilemmas. Irene and Lesley had a close, collegial working relationship, were generally able to discuss their dilemmas and gave each other support in managing them. This relationship enabled Irene to negotiate for improved working conditions in support of her curriculum goals, such as an extra staff member to assist during a particularly stressful time of the day. The extent of their working relationship was also evidenced by Irene helping Lesley draw up the new rosters.

Irene reported that working conditions offered at the centre were 'largely the result of the approach that the Director takes' and she spoke of Lesley's 'vision'. In explaining how the organisation of work generally supported her curriculum efforts she said, 'working at this centre offers conditions that are ... intrinsic to this site and to the vision the Director has of the broader centre'. Conditions which she attributed to Lesley's influence were the quality and number of staff, playground design and availability of resources. She believed that, 'There's that vision, that forward planning, it's all to do with the ... quality of the child's experiences. We can offer that experience, it makes the job easier'.

Lesley's ability to implement her vision and create flexible arrangements in support of curriculum was determined by her use of the discretionary power delegated to her by her employer. This discretionary power was considerable and, although theoretically operating within budgetary constraints, she successfully renegotiated spending limits during the study period. Lesley's use of her discretionary power, her practical knowledge about connections between centre organisation and promoting consistency, and her ability to negotiate with the Board on Management, had enabled her to implement a number of organisational and staffing practices which she believed promoted consistency, such as only enrolling children on a full-time basis, not blending groups at either end of the day and employing staff with higher qualifications than required by regulations.

Employment strategies were central to Lesley's management of the rostering dilemma. In exercising her discretion in employment matters Lesley made some decisions which she knew were controversial. Her approach to hiring and rostering was an eclectic blend of creative and forward thinking practices but included some custom and practice arrangements which are technically illegal according to industrial awards. Lesley's ideal solution to the rostering dilemma would have been to find one extra staff member for each group who would relieve for the core personnel for different periods of time and at different times of the day. Yet, she saw this as an 'impossibility' as she did not believe that people would be prepared to take such fragmented work. She used her discretion in employment matters as a resource in managing this aspect of her teaching dilemma.

Finding extra staff and incorporating them into the centre proved to be problematic for a number of reasons. One, Lesley had to reorganise the work of existing staff in order to create jobs that she believed would attract applicants. Two, she had to encourage functional flexibility in both existing staff and applicants. Three, finding satisfactory staff was very time consuming and stressful. New staff were employed on a casual basis for an indefinite trial period and, while Lesley and Irene both found aspects of this process unsatisfactory, Lesley believed it was necessary to delay offers of permanent employment until staff had demonstrated that they could contribute to consistency of approach by working within the centre philosophy. Four, the extra staffing costs were significant. Lesley's employment strategies implemented over the study period (primarily in implementing the 38-hour week) contributed to a budget over-run of $50,000. This amount was about 11 percent of the centre's gross income.

Managing dilemmas: reflecting on outcomes and generating new strategies

Irene found her strategy of doing work outside her paid rostered hours had enhanced her curriculum work but it did not prove a viable strategy for managing her dilemma. She was working even longer hours and had less time to recuperate from the demands of the work.

When one of her long-term non-workplace strategies to manage her dilemma—finding other work at the end of the year—failed she began to consider other strategies. Irene's close and generous relationship with Lesley enabled her to negotiate a part-time position. Irene reflected on the competing values she tried to reconcile:

> *I think it's going to make a tremendous difference to me only working 30 hours a week. Whereas I don't think it's ideal perhaps for the kids ... maybe it's the way things have got to go, because the 38-hour week is going to make a difference that way.... it will mean there will have to be extra faces anyway, and if people can be fresher for their jobs, all the better.*

In a subsequent interview she said that she wanted to work two and a half days a week and Lesley had agreed to trial this arrangement as she was 'keen' for her to stay. They decided that each would work the full operational day with the children on two days of the week and have a 'cross-over day' when they each worked six hours. Irene felt she would manage this as she reported often working a 10-hour day anyway. They began working to this arrangement at the beginning of the following year.

Irene felt that this arrangement did work out and reported that only one child had really seemed affected by the 'unpredictability' of not knowing which teacher would be there on any particular day. Irene felt that having a full-time assistant helped this child and, in noting that somebody would be there fewer hours, she expressed her opinion that, 'it's probably a mistake to think that you're the person whose indispensable'. Irene described herself as mesmerised by her work and thought she would never again work full-time as a teacher in child care.

Lesley noted benefits of this arrangement in terms of the emotional behaviour of the children and her feelings of completeness in following a child's whole day at the centre:

> *When I'm here all day I find ... I just have more time and they [the children] are so much more placid and contented.... It is absolutely wonderful to have seen the children come in the morning, seen the mother and then said goodbye to the child and the mother in the evening.*

But Lesley still had work to do apart from her contact responsibilities and was still required to work every day. She found these arrangements very tiring and spoke of being 'wrecked' after her two 11-hour days. These work arrangements lasted for 10 months before Lesley became a non-contact Director and organised for another staff member to assume her contact responsibilities. Early in the following year Irene was successful in getting a part-time position at a sessional kindergarten but she agreed to continue working at the centre until April when Lesley thought she would be ready to reassume contact responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

This paper began by posing a theoretical problem for early childhood teachers: the tendency to under-theorise the social context in which curriculum is created, thus limiting understanding of the way context influences practice. In the cases presented here the following employment relations constructs have enabled the description and understanding of some of the practical knowledge brought to bear by the teachers in their work as curriculum decision makers:

* the reciprocal nature of relations at work;
* processes leading to the development of workplace custom and practice rules;
* the role of discretion in setting the parameters within which teachers can act to devise strategies other than changes to their own practice; and
* the role of teachers' ability and willingness to negotiate.

By focusing on connections the teachers perceived between their efforts to create curriculum and the prevailing employment relations this study has shown how these relations were both a source of dilemmas and a resource for dilemma management. The teaching dilemmas reported here illustrate how competing educational and work imperatives became entangled and engendered teaching dilemmas. The teachers' differing educational considerations and dilemma management strategies reflected the different positions they occupied. In managing the dilemmas the teachers considered a range of options, and sought to utilise whatever resources they had, including the resources available to them due to their position as employees. Their use of positional power was not always conscious as the central focus for reflecting on their dilemmas was their educational beliefs. It was predominantly against educational criteria, they judged the utility of strategies they used to manage their dilemmas.

Studying the unfolding of the teaching dilemmas enabled an exploration of aspects of the workplace which the teachers felt able to alter. The discretionary power available to, and used by, the teachers was an important factor in how they experienced and managed teaching dilemmas. Lesley made extensive use of her discretionary power in relation to employment matters. Both teachers were willing to negotiate, and did so from their positions as trusted and valued employees. The relationships built up at work could therefore be seen, in this case, as a vehicle for individual agency. Negotiation was an important strategy in securing resources and 'the willingness of teachers to engage in negotiation seemed to depend on their perceptions of themselves in power relations with others' (Halliwell, 1990:239–240). Economic arguments were important in Lesley's negotiations with her employer. When negotiating with the Board of Management to reduce staff working hours without reducing pay, Lesley was able to argue that enrolments were high and that they had generated a surplus the previous year. The budget deficit created over the study period had to be recouped and to maintain viability fees were expected to rise.

This paper has alluded to a process of teachers' knowledge about creating curriculum becoming situated, that is, as these teachers acted to manage teaching dilemmas they came to know particular ways of working that were more or less effective in that context. Lesley and Irene knew that shorter contact hours competed with traditional ways of providing consistent interpersonal environments. They also knew that in attempting to work in traditional ways in the child care context, long contact hours contributed to staff turnover and burnout thereby confounding efforts to promote consistency. The strategies devised to manage their dilemmas often led to new practices, at times upsetting the ways of being and behaving that had been established at the workplace and therefore requiring further reflection on desired ends and probable means. Further research would assist an understanding of the ways teachers' core beliefs about their professional responsibilities interact with physical and social aspects of their workplaces to challenge assumptions of what it means to teach.

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AUTHOR

Judith Burton, doctoral student, Centre for Applied Studies in Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology, Locked Bag No.2, Red Hill, 4059. Specialisations: Early childhood teachers' knowledge, industrial relations in early childhood care and education.